

From: Lois Laczko April 20, 2009 12:20:58 PM
Subject: Economic Development Commission Minutes 03/12/2009 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
March 12, 2009
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Frank called the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 7:30 AM in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Commission members Mark Deming, Nancy Haase, Alan Levesque, Alan Needham, Derek Peterson, Chuck Minor and Lou George were present.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of February 5, 2009

Commissioner Levesque made a motion to approve the February 5, 2009 minutes as written. Commissioner Peterson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. STATUS OF CHANGES TO SIMSBURY ZONING REGULATIONS

Chairman Frank stated that he did receive an e-mail from Mr. Peck stating that he was unable to attend this morning's meeting. Regarding the PAD Regulation, the e-mail stated that this new regulation was currently being presented to all of the Boards and Commissions for their comments and input. This regulation is intended to provide a mixed use zone and to streamline the approval process.

Commissioner Peterson stated that Mr. Peck and Attorney DeCrescenzo did a great job presenting this regulation. He feels that this is the right time to discuss this issue because it is not on the heels of any particular project. Commissioner Levesque stated that he, too, feels that good progress is being made, although there are still metrics that need to be added into the draft regulation.

IV. STATUS OF CHARRETTE INITIATIVE

Chairman Frank stated that Mr. Peck is continuing his work regarding funding. He will know within a few weeks if the Town will receive any grants. The Charrette Subcommittee will be meeting next week to discuss how to move forward.

V. STATUS OF CHANGES TO TOWN WEB SITE

Commissioner Haase stated that Mr. Bazzano is still working on this. She stated that there is an overall redesign to the website itself. Within the next few weeks, Mr. Bazzano will have something to show the Commission. She asked that this item be put on the agenda for the April meeting.

Chairman Frank requested that Item VIII be moved up on the agenda as Item VI. The Commission agreed.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Nancy Haase to discuss a request by the First Selectman regarding welcome programs for new businesses

Commissioner Haase stated that there was a special meeting of the Board of Selectmen with the Chamber. She stated that a suggestion was made to send out welcome packages. These packets will be put together for new businesses and will contain Main Street material, contact names, as well as other pertinent information to distribute to new business owners. The Town is trying to reach out to new business owners who are investing in Simsbury to let them know what services are in Town and to make them feel welcome.

Commissioner Haase stated that there are several new businesses that have just come to Town, including the Skating Center, which has just been purchased by the owner of LAZ parking. They are looking to bring competitiveness back to the center. She stated that a new store would be going in on Wolcott Street and also on the corner of West Street. Commissioner Haase stated that Martocchio Music will be relocating their music business from Riverdale Farms in Avon to One Massaco Way. She stated that through good work of Town staff, they have preserved the building while accomplishing safety issues regarding egress.

Regarding the Developers Showcase, Chairman Frank stated that there is now funding available. The Chamber has donated \$100 and 5 individuals have pledged an additional \$350 for this purpose.

Commissioner George stated that the EDC has been involved with this event for the past several years. He stated that it is worth doing again this year.

Commissioner Haase stated that last year, she put together, at minimum cost, a display. She stated that the River View has been generous in donating their tradeshow setup. She stated that she would also ask Main Street Partnership to donate materials that could be handed out at their booth.

Chairman Frank stated that they will need volunteers from the EDC who would be willing to attend this event on behalf of the Town and EDC. He also stated that people would be needed to set up, man and break down the booth. There should be a total of 4-5 people. Commissioner Haase volunteered to run the booth. Commissioner Deming also volunteered. Several members of the Commission were not able to attend because of a conflict in their schedule. Commissioner Haase stated that she would ask members of Main Street to volunteer. She stated that she would get enough people for this event.

Chairman Frank stated that, at the last meeting, the Commission agreed to send a letter in support of the alcohol license at the Simsbury Farm Restaurant. He stated that this letter was read into the record at the Zoning Commission meeting.

VII. BRIEFING ON HISTORY OF THE AIRPORT ACQUISITION PROJECT

Chairman Frank stated that he is a member of the ADHOC Committee. He has attended several meetings and presentations and has the report regarding acquiring the airport. He stated that the Board of Selectmen has voted to refer the matter of airport acquisition to the EDC. It is now the responsibility of the EDC to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen regarding how to move forward with the acquisition of the airport.

Mr. Thomas, Airport Manager stated that he is an airport advocate. His personal goal is to be objective in this process. He wants this airport to be preserved. Mr. Thomas stated that the Simsbury Airport is leased to the Simsbury Flying Club. The airport has an active flight school and tenants in the building. He stated that they have an annual Simsbury Fly-In, which is the largest event of its kind in New England, which has brought national publicity to Simsbury. Mr. Thomas also stated that this airport is self supporting and if the acquisition is made by Simsbury, the airport will still be self supporting.

Mr. Thomas stated that airport preservation is a priority with the Federal and State governments. Simsbury Airport has been identified as one of the airports that the FAA considers essential to preserve. The POCD states that the airport should be preserved, primarily, as an engine for economic development. He stated that the Planning Commission endorsed the study of

the Town acquisition and the First Selectman gave permission to conduct this review. The consultant drafted this report in 2008 and now this issue has been referred back to the EDC.

Mr. Thomas stated that unfortunately, the consultant's report contains significant errors that lead to the conclusion that the airport would operate in the red and that it would require taxpayer support. This conclusion is, in his opinion, the greatest obstacle to the Town's acquisition of the airport. Mr. Thomas stated that in his experience with the consultants, when issues and errors were pointed out, even if the consultant agreed, those changes were never made.

Mr. Thomas stated that in the consultant's report regarding estimate of revenue and expenses, they estimated the cash flow at a -\$19,000 the first year and -\$7,000 in subsequent years. He also showed the Commission the current revenues of the Simsbury Airport as \$172,000.

Mr. Thomas stated that there were other issues within the report as well. He stated that the expense of Town administration should be eliminated because no additional staff would be required. Regarding insurance, he stated that no Town insures private property; the estimate of \$15,000 is too high. Regarding capital expenses, Mr. Thomas stated that the repairing of privately owned hangers is not the responsibility of Town. This expense should be eliminated.

Mr. Thomas stated that the consultant has proposed an awkward split between the Town and the FBO as to who pays for what. As an example, he stated that the consultant's report assumes that the Town will pay for the electricity for the runway lights and that the FBO will pay for electricity for the airport building. This and similar assumptions create unnecessary complexity. He feels that these assumptions need to be reviewed and revised.

Mr. Thomas showed the Commission his attempt at correcting these problems. With his calculations, he stated that there would be a profit of \$35,000 in the first year and \$45,000 in subsequent years.

Mr. Thomas stated that in the report, the consultant has laid out 32 different scenarios for each set of capital expenses. He stated that most of the capital expenses are covered by the FAA and the State, although a few are not covered by these grants. He stated that the first thing that needs to be done by the EDC would be to sort through these 32 options and decide which make sense.

Chairman Frank stated that the initial study, Phase I, has been completed. They now need to decide if they should go to Phase II, which is a more in-

depth study. Phase III would then be implementation.

Mr. Thomas explained what needed to be done in Phase II. He stated that it is necessary to make sure: that the landlord will want to continue with this study; the FAA should have a say if the Town would need to hire a consultant or if the Town could conduct the next phase themselves; and talk to East Granby and the property owners to the north of the airport regarding their attitudes to Phase II.

Mr. Thomas stated that Phase II will have to include an environmental study; the market value of the airport will need to be known; and a recommendation of what the best management option would be. He stated that the FAA funds all but 1.25% of this study.

Chairman Frank stated that there is a lot of work to be done. There needs to be a project director. Someone will be needed to manage this project effectively and efficiently.

Commissioner Haase stated that the major issues are making sure that the Town of East Granby and the abutting property owners are on board with the next steps. In order for the airport to be compliant it would require some tree clearing; they need to get the abutting property owner's permission to do this. Mr. Thomas stated that there are waivers available, although he still needs more information regarding this.

Steven Smith stated that he operates the flight school at the airport and he is also a representative of the Aircraft Owner and Pilots Organization. He stated that the most important consideration of comparing Simsbury Airport is the proximity to other airports, not comparable size or use or aircraft type. He stated that Bradley International Airport is not a comparable airport. Skylark and Robertson airports are fairly comparable. Mr. Smith stated that Phase II needs to look at other comparable airports.

Mr. Smith stated that there are several things that are missing in the Phase I report, including an economic impact of the airport construction project under the grant programs enabled by Municipal ownership. The report also missed the fees generated by aircraft registration. Also, there are other potential businesses that could be attracted.

Regarding his recommendations, Mr. Smith stated that they revise the financial analysis and add the missing data. Also, adding real growth scenarios to include expansion based new hangars and available property on-airport for lease to new businesses.

Commissioner Deming questioned what would be the most effective way that the EDC would participate with the airport interest and with other Town

officials to start and see Phase II through. Mr. Thomas stated that, in his opinion, the Town can do this themselves or they can retain a consultant.

Commissioner Levesque suggested that the EDC discuss this issue with Mr. Sawitzke and find out why this draft still has discrepancies. They may also want to ask Clough Harbor to come to a future meeting for discussions.

Commissioner George stated that if there is a push to move this matter along, he feels that it should and will come from this Commission.

Commissioner Deming suggested that the EDC put together a Subcommittee of 3-4 people in order to discuss these issues and oversee this process in order to get to the next phase.

Commissioner Haase made a motion that the Economic Development Commission will take responsibility and manage, through a Subcommittee, to follow through with the airport acquisition project in order to get to Phase II. Commissioner George seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Deming stated that the Airport Subcommittee should decide what needs to be on the agenda for the next meeting and who should be brought in to their next meeting to discuss certain issues. Commissioners George, Haase, Minor, Levesque and Peterson volunteered to be on the Airport Subcommittee, although all members are invited to attend their meetings.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

The Commission members discussed the joint meeting that was held on Tuesday night regarding the PAD regulation. They discussed the possibility of having an EDC special meeting as to what aspects of concern the EDC has with the draft PAD.

Commissioner George stated that the Center Zone is not defined properly. He feels that work should continue with the Center Zone along with the PAD Regulation. He feels that the boundary of the Center Zone should have already been redefined.

Commissioner Levesque stated that there are several blanks in the draft that need to be filled in. These are important issues that need to be discussed.

The Commission decided on the tentative date of March 19th for a special meeting to discuss the PAD and the status of the Center Zone Regulation.

Commissioner Haase distributed a TMMF brochure to the Commission members.

Also, she stated that the Tariffville Village Association will be hosting a white water kayak racing event on the weekend of April 25th. She stated that the Tariffville Village Association is currently looking for sponsors and volunteers.

Commissioner Haase stated that she attended a forum regarding affordable housing and its effect on Municipal budgets. She stated that many good ideas were shared at this forum, which could be incorporated into the process for incentive housing.

Commissioner Haase stated that the Main Street Partnership will be holding a Taxpayer's Meeting, which will be held on April 15th at 5:30 p.m. at The Hartford. She stated that Main Street will be sending out more information regarding this.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Levesque made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 am. Commissioner Haase seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.