

From: Lois Laczko May 19, 2009 10:25:29 AM
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Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
April 16, 2009
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Deming 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 Kevin Crimmins, Derek Peterson, Nancy Haase, Alan Needham, Thomas Frank and Chuck Minor were present.

II. Approval of Minutes of March 10, 2009 special meeting, March 12, 2009 regular meeting, March 19, 2009 special meeting, and April 2, 2009 special meeting

Commissioner Crimmins made one edit to the April 2, 2009 minutes.

Commissioner Crimmins made a motion to approve the April 2, 2009 minutes as amended. Commissioner Minor seconded the motion, which was approved. Commissioners Needham and Frank abstained.

Commissioner Needham made a motion to approve the March 12, 2009 meeting minutes as written. Commissioner Minor seconded the motion, which was approved. Commissioner Frank abstained.

Commissioner Needham made a motion to approve the March 19, 2009 meeting minutes as written. Commissioner Peterson seconded the motion, which was approved. Commissioners Crimmins and Frank abstained.

III. Web Site Update

Commissioner Haase stated that she and Commissioner Crimmins forwarded some information to Rick Bazzano. In return, he sent back a mock up of the EDC webpage. She stated that they are currently looking at the details of the website. The overall website has taken on a lot of the branding that Main

Street Partnership has; every aspect of the webpage looks polished as a result of this. She stated that they would like the EDC webpage to incorporate some of the Simsbury Main Street photos because they show what a vibrant community Simsbury is.

She stated that there will be more information on the new website, including new links. The website will have a crisper look.

Chairman Deming questioned if the EDC should have a link for new business owners or some type of welcome wagon program. Commissioner Haase stated that there is a business icon that could be clicked on; this can be done from the EDC page. Commissioner Crimmins questioned what the general message would be. Chairman Deming stated that it would welcome the new business to Simsbury and would direct new businesses to certain services and also give out contact names and numbers. Commissioner Crimmins questioned why this would be done for new businesses only. Chairman Deming stated that this would be a more formal way to welcome the new business.

Regarding the welcome wagon, Commissioner Haase stated that Main Street Partnership had a program to welcome new retailers. Two Board members would walk into that new business to welcome them to Town and to let them know the services that Simsbury offers. She stated that the EDC could do this in a letter. She stated that another option could be to create a business resource link for new businesses on the website regarding this same information.

Commissioner Frank stated that he would recommend and encourage this form of hospitality especially when there is no cost involved. A new business should be greeted by the Chamber as well as the EDC.

Chairman Deming stated that the Commission would continue this discussion at the next meeting. Commissioner Haase stated that she is not sure when the launch date of the new website will be.

IV. Update of Airport Study by the Town

Commissioner Crimmins recused himself from the Commission during this discussion.

Mr. Sawitzke distributed the executive summary on the airport study to the Commission members.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that this is a general aviation airport, which the Town would like to preserve. Overall, this property is 101 acres, although it is not all usable land. The Federal Government will provide substantial funding, although if the Town takes these funds, they will need to bring the airport up to FAA standards; this funding is not guaranteed.

In terms of a model operation, Mr. Sawitzke stated that they would be looking at an establishment of local oversight; the Town does not need to run the airport. He stated that the Town would probably go out with an RFP for a base operator to run the day to day operations.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that he and Mr. Peck feel that prior to going to the Phase II study, the Town would need the following: a firm commitment from the property owner that they will sell the property and also give the Town unrestricted use for environmental studies; permission for a pure environmental study because of the close proximity to the River and Pickral Cove; a letter from East Granby stating that they do not object; and an audit of the Flying Club's books.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that the airport is shown to make a modest profit, although the question would be if it is worth it because the Town currently receives taxes on the property.

Commissioner Haase questioned if the original RFP was completed by the consultant. Mr. Sawitzke stated that this study was not supposed to be in depth; it was just an operating model. Phase II will be a more detailed study.

Commissioner Frank questioned what the most important issue was prior to going to Phase II. Mr. Sawitzke stated that getting the property owner's commitment is the most important; the second most important issue is getting an agreement for an audit of the Flying Club's books.

Commissioner Needham questioned how it would impact the Town if the Town did not buy the airport and it was available for commercial development. Mr. Sawitzke stated that this property is zoned industrial; the property owner could sell the property at any time for commercial development.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that the Board of Selectmen is looking for a recommendation from the EDC as well as how to proceed. Commissioner Frank questioned what was expected of the EDC. He questioned if they were expected to review these materials and make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen as to whether or not this Commission believes work should begin leading to Phase II or if this Commission is expected to actually manage the process of getting the pre-conditions established. Mr. Sawitzke stated that the Board of Selectmen would like a recommendation based on the EDC's review of the study.

Commissioner Haase stated that it would be good to have the Airport Subcommittee work closely with Town staff throughout this process.

Commissioner Minor stated his concerns regarding some of the assumptions in the report that may not be correct. He is bothered by the fact that he does not feel that Phase I has been completed. He questioned where the consultant currently stands regarding some of the discrepancies in the report. Mr. Sawitzke stated that the consultant has and will continue to evaluate the comments. They will include all written responses in their report from Phase I. Mr. Sawitzke stated that some of the responses from the consultant were distributed to the Commission members with the Executive Summary, although they have not yet responded to the presentation by Bill Thomas. The final report will respond to all comments.

Chairman Deming asked that the Commission members read and review all of the information that Mr. Sawitzke distributed to be discussed at the next meeting. He also asked Mr. Sawitzke to forward any new responses from the consultants to the Commission members.

Commissioner Frank stated that if the Town acquires this airport, it will be a big project. He stated that the prospect for economic development is highly questionable and there are improvements that will need to be made; the safety zone improvements and the extension of the runway will require a lot of work and money. He stated that he was troubled by the comment Mr. Sawitzke made regarding that once the Town starts taking Federal money to buy the airport, then the improvements have to be made and there is no guarantee that the Federal Government will come up with those improvement funds. He feels that this is a huge issue. There is a potential financial risk in this project that the EDC should discuss. He stated that a separate issue is the alternative use for this land. The EDC should take a point of view for what is best for the economic development future for Simsbury.

Commissioner Minor stated that the EDC should take into consideration what is in the POCD and what the future vision for this area is.

V. Hiram Peck – Developers Showcase, feedback/comments; HARCO update; need for a strategic economic development plan.

Mr. Peck stated that the Developers Showcase went well. They received many good comments from people along with good feedback on the display. He thanked the Chamber for their initial fee for the booth. Commissioner Haase also thanked Mr. Peck for all of his hard work.

Regarding the HARCO property, Mr. Peck stated the applicant received approval for a subdivision of one 40-acre lot. The applicant offered a dedication of 9 acres for a landscape easement; a 100 foot landscape strip easement along the front of the property line at Hopmeadow Street for future landscaping; and 6 acres in the rear of the property that abuts the

River for a conservation easement. The property owners do not have any plans for the development of this property; they wanted to subdivide this property in order to sell it.

Chairman Deming stated that Mary Glassman feels that it is necessary to have a strategic economic development plan; this will be a benefit for the Town. Mr. Peck stated that the need for this plan is important. The last EDC plan that was written is outdated. He feels that it is time to do a strategic economic development plan to provide guidance for the EDC and to let people know where this Commission is with regard to its economic development proposals, policies, plans and programs. Mr. Peck stated that this plan will state the mission of the EDC and where this Commission is headed.

Mr. Peck stated that there is currently no money in the budget for this, although he feels that it can be done in-house. He stated that a Subcommittee can be set up. He would like to have something in place by the end of this year.

Chairman Deming questioned if there were any sample documents of this kind. Mr. Peck stated that he would get a sample document to the Commission members; Town staff will help in putting this document together. Mr. Peck stated that there is potential legislation regarding regional economic plans of development. He stated that Connecticut is one of only two states in the country that does not have a regional economic plan of development. He stated that he and Mary Glassman have discussed putting together a model for a regional economic development plan that could be the model for the whole State, although this would be different from the strategic economic development plan.

Chairman Deming stated that this will be put on the next agenda for discussion.

Mr. Peck stated that, at the last Board of Selectmen meeting, they approved a tax abatement request for the Hoffman Dealership. He stated that the Board of Selectmen also had a lengthy discussion regarding if this program should continue.

Commissioner Haase stated that it would be good for the EDC to know what businesses took advantage of the tax abatement program. Mr. Peck stated that he would get this information for the Commission members so it could be discussed at the next meeting.

Regarding the PAD regulation, Mr. Peck stated that comments could be forwarded to him. They are currently working on the second draft in order to go to public meeting and then public hearing.

Regarding the Charrette, Mr. Peck stated that Lynn Charest wrote an historic survey grant, which the Town was awarded in the amount of \$30,000. The Town received another grant in the amount of \$50,000 for stream bank stabilization, which Howard Beach and Lynn Charest wrote.

Mr. Peck stated that the Town currently has approximately \$100,000 for the Town Center Charrette. The Charrette Subcommittee has selected Code Studio to conduct the Charrette. He is hopeful that the template from the Town Center Charrette can be used in other areas of the Town. He stated that within the next 2-3 weeks, the contract will be signed by the consultant; the Charrette will hopefully be done in September with a regulation by the end of the year.

VI. Establishing/formalizing permanent/temporary liaisons to other boards and commissions, subcommittees and other organizations (SMSP, etc.)

Chairman Deming stated that it would be good for each Commission member to select a Board or Commission and go to those meetings and report back on economic related issues. He asked for volunteers.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that he agreed to be on the EDC, although he does not feel that he has enough time to be a liaison to another Board or Commission. He stated that he makes an effort to maintain awareness in Town by reviewing the minutes, agenda and notices for various Commissions.

Mr. Peck stated that if anyone has any questions regarding another Board of Commission to ask him.

VII. Discussion of goals and objectives for Fiscal year 2009-10

Chairman Deming stated that over the next few months, they will need to look at the budget and decide what the EDC would like to do in the next fiscal year. He stated that he has discussed with Mary Glassman regarding doing a study regarding the best scenario for Simsbury and how that would affect the tax break down between commercial and residential. She stated that there may be some money in the budget for this type of build-out study. Mr. Peck stated that this could be part of the strategic plan.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that the discussion of goals and objectives for fiscal year 09/10 should be a subset of a conversation that the EDC should have in order to develop the strategic economic development plan. He stated that they will need to make decisions regarding if and how they should fund organizations like Main Street Partnership. He feels that these are important decisions that they cannot make effectively unless they have a strategic plan.

Commissioner Haase stated that if the EDC has goals, and associated with the goals is funding, yet the funding does not always come from the EDC budget, she feels that this creates a lot of confusion. Mr. Peck stated that he would like to work more closely with the Boards and Commissions during the next budget cycle to discuss these types of issues.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that the goal and objective for this year should be to complete a strategic plan; the EDC cannot do their job without it.

VIII. New Business, Old Business

Commissioner Haase stated that the displays in the entryway of the Town Hall are three years old. They are very outdated and feel that they should come down. Mr. Peck suggested that they replace them with new ones that could highlight the Riverview, Abigail's or Hoffman's.

In response to a question by Commissioner Peterson regarding the Getty station, Mr. Peck stated that the owner would like to make this into a convenient store and also put a canopy over the pump stations. They would also like to add new landscaping on the property.

IX. Adjournment

Commissioner Needham made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 am. Commissioner Haase seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.