

From: Lois Laczko June 17, 2009 3:18:13 PM  
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To: SimsburyCT\_EconMin  
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES  
May 14, 2009  
REGULAR MEETING

1. 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, Nancy Haase, Alan Needham, Alan Levesque, Thomas Frank and Lou George were present.

Chairman Deming asked that the agenda be amended to put Item 4 after Item 8. The Commission agreed.

2. Approval of Minutes of April 16, 2009

One edit was made to the minutes.

Commissioner Haase made a motion to approve the April 16, 2009 minutes as amended. Commissioner Frank seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

3. Web Site Update (Nancy Haase and Kevin Crimmins)

Commissioner Haase stated that she has spoken with Mr. Bazzano regarding some of the links on the website that are redundant. Eventually, these links will be taken off.

Commissioner Haase stated that the new website looks great. Branding from Main Street Partnership was used, which was also a cost savings to the Town. The website also has GIS on it. She encouraged each of the Commission members to go to the website to see the great changes.

4. Hiram Peck: description/status of the tax abatement program; need for a strategic economic development plan; status of the PAD

Regarding the strategic economic development plan, Mr. Peck stated that there have been two efforts in the past to write a plan for the Town. He stated that Connecticut is one out of only two States in the country that does not have a regional economic development plan. This Commission may want to consider a regional effort to coordinate with other Towns. He suggested starting this discussion through the Farmington Valley Collaborative. Mr. Peck volunteered to start these preliminary discussions.

Mr. Peck stated that he does have several regional models from two different States, which he will e-mail to the Commission members for their review.

Regarding the tax abatement program, Mr. Peck stated that there is a plan that is currently in place, which has been used 8-9 times since 2003. He stated that there are different levels of abatement in the plan, depending upon if it is a new business that is coming to Town or an existing business that is expanding.

Mr. Peck stated that at a recent Board of Selectmen meeting, the tax abatement program was discussed: if the Town was simply rewarding businesses that were going to already expand anyway; if the program was effective; if the program is front-end loaded; if the program should be reorganized or if there should be a different focus; or if this program should continue. Mr. Peck stated that any feedback from the business community would be very helpful.

Commissioner Haase stated that she would be interested to know if surrounding Towns have a similar program and how it is structured. Mr. Peck stated that some surrounding Towns do have this type of program; some are more aggressive than Simsbury. He stated that he will be putting a matrix together including all of this information.

Commissioner Needham questioned how the Town measures intent. Mr. Peck stated that they need to look at what the benefit will be to the Town regarding dollars. Commissioner Crimmins stated that this is one reason why they need to have a strategic economic development plan in place.

Regarding the Charrette, Mr. Peck stated that he is waiting to receive the contract from Code Studio. The dates for the Charrette are September 11th -16th. The venue is still uncertain; he is looking for a venue that will hold a large number of people. Saturday, September 12th will be the initial presentation to the public; Monday will be the second public session; and Wednesday will be the third public session.

Mr. Peck stated that the Charrette will focus on the Town Center. In addition to the Charrette team, the consultant from the Incentive Housing Zone will be in Town and will be a part of the Charrette process. There will also be special land use legal expert teams there and an engineer who specializes in low impact development, storm water quality as it runs off from the area that is being studied toward the river. Mr. Peck stated that he is trying to get everyone in the same room at the same time. The end result will be a form based code for the Town Center, which will be presented at a public hearing.

Commissioner Frank questioned if Boards and Commissions would be invited to officially participate in the Charrette process. Mr. Peck stated that the Planning Commission would need to be careful, but the EDC does not have regulatory authority. The EDC could participate as a group.

Commissioner George questioned where the Charrette study area would be. Mr. Peck stated that they are still trying to determine this. Commissioner Needham stated that there is a great deal of work that is being left to Town staff. He volunteered to help if it was needed.

Chairman Deming stated that the end result of the Charrette will be a form based code. He questioned how this would dovetail into the PAD regulation. Mr. Peck stated that a form based code is all encompassing. All others will be a subset; they will fit together as tools. He stated that the PAD regulation will fit into the form based code.

Regarding the status of the PAD Regulation, Mr. Peck stated that the Subcommittee will be meeting today at 5:30 p.m. They will have three meetings total. He stated that there will be a public meeting prior to the public hearing in June. He would like to get things finalized as soon as possible.

Commissioner Frank stated that he feels it is in the best interest of the Town to get the PAD Regulation in place as soon as possible. He suggested that the EDC charge the Chairman to represent and speak at the public meetings to express the views of the EDC. Chairman Deming stated that he will be present at the Subcommittee meetings. The EDC can send a letter to the Zoning Commission after the Subcommittee has had their three meetings.

##### 5. Reports: Simsbury Main Street Partnership; FVVA

Commissioner Haase stated that Main Street Partnership will be installing marble benches in front of Eno Memorial Hall, as well as doing a rededication at Eno. They will also be holding the Taste of Simsbury; this event will be held at the Simsbury Inn on August 27th. Commissioner Haase stated that the Connecticut Main Street will be having an award reception

on June 8th at Eno. This reception is an annual event; they will be bringing it to Simsbury this year.

Regarding the Talcott Mountain Music Festival (TMMF), Commissioner Haase stated that Main Street Partnership is trying to get the contract finalized. There have been changes to the contract regarding bringing outside businesses to the event.

Commissioner George stated that the EDC should have commented on this issue at the beginning. If outside businesses are brought in, this will not help Simsbury businesses. He stated that the EDC supports Main Street Partnership. He feels that they should have a definitive plan to protect businesses in Simsbury. Main Street and the EDC should be working together. He feels that there is a disconnect between them. Commissioner George stated that there is no other event in Simsbury that rivals what the TMMF does in terms of bringing people into downtown.

#### 6. Goals and Objectives for 2009-10

Chairman Deming stated that the following are some of the goals and objectives that he believes the Commission should discuss: determine whether to pursue Phase II of the Airport Study; finish and amend Phase I if Phase II is not pursued; review the definition of Town Center Zone from an economic point of view and work toward an economic Conceptual Master Plan; discuss whether the EDC should complete a Strategic Economic Development Plan; decide if the EDC should continue to utilize the resources of the MHA to better integrate, market and promote Simsbury; decide if the EDC should support the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, Simsbury Main Street Partnership, FVVA and the Visitor's Center.

Commissioner Haase stated that this Commission usually gives goals and objectives for the annual report. The goals for the report are already printed. She distributed the annual report to the Commission members for their review.

Commissioner Haase stated that the EDC made a decision to do an economic development plan after the Charrette was done. In the meantime, the EDC did research regarding what kind of economic development the Town needs.

Chairman Deming stated that Mr. Peck would be showing the Commission some models of a regional plan. Commissioner George stated that Connecticut is one of only two States that does not have a regional economic development plan. One of the reasons is that most governments are regionally structured; Connecticut is not. Also, in Connecticut, the MHA is the only tool Towns have to think regionally when competing with other

States. Commissioner Haase feels that initially, Simsbury needs to do something as a Town before they can do something regionally.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that there is a lot of benefit to continuing involvement with MHA regarding a regional economic plan. He did not believe that this would be the full scope of MHA; he felt that it would be Farmington Valley Regional, which is a subset of MHA. He feels that this would make more sense. Commissioner Crimmins stated that he feels the Town still needs MHA, but in terms of an economic development plan, he feels that they need to talk with the abutting Towns. Commissioner George stated that the Farmington Valley Regional is a subset in the bigger group. He feels that Simsbury needs the tools to go more regionally, which includes the MHA.

Commissioner Needham stated that the economic development plan needs to start somewhere. He feels the best place would be to see the models that Mr. Peck has. There needs to be a clearer picture of what this plan looks like and to have a better understanding of it.

Commissioner Frank stated that he would like to hear from the Planning Commission regarding their thoughts when they gave this responsibility to the EDC. He stated that this Commission needs a process to get this done. He suggested appointing a Subcommittee that is charged with the responsibility to bring a plan for the proposal back to the EDC.

Commissioner George stated that the goals outlined in the 07/08 annual report are also the goals that the EDC has for this year. Commissioner Crimmins stated that the EDC needs to state their goals and objectives, which will be the framework for the economic development plan. He feels that the EDC already has the structure that is needed.

Regarding the status of the Charrette, Chairman Deming stated that the Town has approximately \$125,000 available to fund this study. The outcome of the Charrette will be a Zoning Code, which will dovetail with the PAD Regulation. He stated that the PAD Subcommittee will be having three meetings and there will be a public meeting held in June. It is possible that the PAD Regulation will be up for a vote at the end of June.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that the Charrette has become about the tactics of how to implement the goals and objectives within the Town Center. They cannot try to create the tactics without knowing the strategy. Commissioner Needham stated that the outcome of the Charrette will affect the economic development plan. Commissioner George stated that the EDC needs to decide what the best way to economic development in the Center of Town is. They need to help promote businesses.

Regarding the EDC's goal of reviewing the definition of Town Center Zone, Chairman Deming stated that this will be tied into the Charrette. The Commission members discussed the Center Zone boundaries. Commissioner George stated that there are three issues regarding the Town Center boundaries: how far to go south; where the West Street boundary should be; and where the Iron Horse Boulevard boundary should be.

Commissioner Frank asked Commissioners Needham and Crimmins for their opinions regarding what questions they feel an economic development plan should answer. Commissioner Needham stated that the EDC needs a blueprint besides the POCD about how the Commission feels it needs to go forward. He stated that part of the plan has to include the economic benefits to making a larger and longer Town Center or denser Town Center. Both would be very different communities. Commissioner Crimmins stated that the plan has a lot to do with what they want the Town to look like in the future. He also feels that the EDC should be looking long-term.

#### 7. Old Business, New Business

Commissioner George stated that yesterday, the Board of Selectmen and the Chamber met. They discussed the signal booster ordinance. This proposed ordinance will require certain buildings to put in an amplified radio system, at the owners expense. Although this is a safety issue, it is not good in terms of attracting businesses to Simsbury. They also discussed the local vendor preference update. This is a proposed ordinance where the Municipality will give a preference to a vendor if the local vendor is within 10% of the low bid; the Town can accept the local vendor. Commissioner George feels that the EDC should weigh in on this issue because this is something that will help local businesses. Another issue that the EDC should weigh in on and pay attention to is the replacing of the power lines along the Town Center. There were discussions regarding cutting and trimming trees, which the Town opposed and also discussions regarding possibly going underground.

Mr. Peck stated that the owners of a new restaurant at the Tariffville Mill will be going to the Zoning Commission; they are seeking a beer and wine permit. Secondly, the DRB denied the Gulf sign for the convenience store on West Street. Commissioner Frank stated that the EDC has a duty to express their views and concerns to the DRB regarding some of their decisions. Their Guidelines for Community Design are possibly too restrictive. Chairman Deming suggested that the EDC recommend to the Boards and Commissions to be more flexible when it comes to economic development.

Commissioner Haase stated that the EDC should also pay attention to the Aquarian Water building as well. The big issue with this building is

that there is virtually no parking.

8. Status of Airport Study (Lou George and Nancy Haase)

Commissioner Crimmins recused himself from the Commission during this discussion.

Commissioner George stated that he spoke with Bill Thomas regarding the issues he had with this study. He and Mr. Thomas spoke to the FAA; there is clear flexibility on some issues. Commissioner George stated that he will be meeting with the attorney for the property owner next week. The next step will be to contact East Granby regarding the expansion of the runway.

Commissioner George stated that he would like to change the terminology from Phase to Level. He feels that this will lessen the confusion regarding what this entails.

Commissioner Haase questioned if Level I was completed. Commissioner George stated that he does not believe Level I has been finished. He feels that this was the final draft for ultimate approval; it did not have final completion.

9. Adjournment

Commissioner Haase made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 am. Commissioner George seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.