

From: Lois Laczko July 14, 2009 9:06:27 AM
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To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
June 11, 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, Derek Petersen, Chuck Minor, Alan Levesque and Thomas Frank were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of May 14, 2009

Commissioner Haase made a motion to approve the May 14, 2009 minutes as written. Commissioner Frank seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

3. Web Site Update: New Welcome Letter and Photos

Chairman Deming stated that there is a new welcome letter on the website. Photos will be added soon, which will be coming from Main Street Partnership. Ms. Floroski stated that Rick Bazzano also has photographs from new photographers in Town that may be included on the website.

Chairman Deming stated the website looks great.

4. Reports: TMMF Concessions, Merchant Parking and Events (Warren Boyle to speak), other FVVA

Chairman Deming stated that he has asked Warren Boyle to speak to the Commission today about how major events in Town affect the local merchants. There has been a series of feedback about this topic. He stated that as the Town expands the concert series and other events come to Town, he feels that the EDC needs to be sensitive to local merchant's complaints. As downtown continues to grow, a more balanced solution needs to be found

regarding issues about parking and access to local businesses.

Ms. Floroski thanked the EDC members that attended the Connecticut Main Street Gala on Monday at Eno Memorial Hall. This annual awards event was held in Simsbury this year. More than 200 people attended this event, including representatives from Main Street's major funders. She also thanked Senator Wilkos and Representative Schofield. Simsbury Main Street Partnership was the host of this event; they won three different awards, including an award for the branding of Simsbury and the preservation study of Eno Memorial Hall.

Ms. Floroski stated that the Town website reflected the branding campaign and because of this, the Town saved a great deal of money. The Town's annual report also reflected the branding campaign, which they plan on doing every year. She stated that this all creates the consistency that the Town has been looking for; it has been a great partnership.

Ms. Floroski stated that Main Street Partnership will be officially kicking off their Shop Simsbury website by the end of the month, which is the last part of the branding campaign. A business owners meeting will be held on June 16th at Eno in order to talk to businesses regarding all of the ways local merchants can promote their businesses.

Regarding the Talcott Mountain Music Festival (TMMF), Ms. Floroski stated that Main Street Partnership has partnered with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra; banners have been placed on Hopmeadow Street to make people aware of this event.

Ms. Floroski stated that Main Street will have having a Taste of Simsbury event on August 27th at the Simsbury Inn. There will also be a special section in the Hartford Courant that will help promote this event; only Simsbury businesses will be advertised and highlighted.

Ms. Floroski stated that Main Street was asked to participate in the ribbon cutting for A Touch of Class; they will have their grand opening on Saturday, June 13th. The store has expanded in size and they will now be open 7 days a week.

There are five marble benches at Eno Memorial Hall; Main Street did the fundraising for these benches. They also rededicated the Veteran's Memorial on Veterans Day. Ms. Floroski stated that Main Street also received a \$1,500 grant from KBE (Konover) to do landscaping around the grounds of the Senior Center.

The Commission discussed the new gateway signs. Ms. Floroski stated that Main Street has been involved with this. Extensive research has been done regarding these signs. She stated that she believes there is enough

funding to complete the first sign.

Mr. Boyle, owner of Fitzgerald's Food, stated that at no time has he ever said that he would like these events in downtown to stop; he would like them to be planned and controlled so he can conduct his business while the events are going on. He stated that major events take up a lot of parking spaces; many volunteers for these events park at his store and customers have little or no parking. He stated that a great example of this is the Hartford Marathon; Simsbury has so many events when this happens. He suggested that these events could take place on the Boulevard or onto the meadows. He feels that the Town should shut the Boulevard down and use the parking lots for what they are intended for. Other solutions need to be found.

Mr. Boyle stated that he has talked to many event coordinators to make arrangements for their volunteers to park elsewhere, to no avail. He stated that there has to be some way that the Town can work these events out so the events can still happen and the merchants can still do business.

Mr. Boyle stated that when Avon had Avon Days, some of the businesses would close down because they lost so much business. After some businesses complained, the Town shut the road down and people parked in public places and the events were on the streets. This helped the merchants greatly.

Mr. Boyle stated that Bruce Kaplan is equally passionate about this issue. He asked that Mr. Boyle address several issues today with this Commission: Mr. Sawitzke may be helpful with solving this issue because this same issue was address in his hometown; Weldon is also having this problem. He stated that they continue to be told by the Town that merchants are not maximizing the potential of big events; he does not see it this way. Mr. Kaplan also feels that the concerts adversely affect the restaurants in the Center.

Mr. Boyle stated the events need to be moved. The St. Mary's Carnival used to be held near the Fire House. Ms. Floroski stated that merchants are not saying that they do not want events downtown. Other sites need to be looked at. Local businesses have other ways they are struggling and this is just another added issue that people rarely pay attention to. Ms. Floroski stated that Mr. Boyle cares about Simsbury, although his business is losing money during these events. The Town's priorities need to be determined. A solution needs to be made and compromises need to be reached. She stated that the Performing Arts Center is a new entity that has been approving many big events in order to grow their Center. She feels that they need to grow it in a way that is consistent with the community. The events need to be managed in a way that does not hurt local businesses.

Commissioner Haase stated that this issue needs to be solved; everyone needs to come together to discuss this issue. She questioned what steps an event must take prior to being approved. She stated that this process may need to be better outlined so these issues can be addressed. Mr. Boyle stated that there was a planning session earlier in the year where local businesses were invited to talk with Ms. Glassman and members of the Board of Selectmen to plan out priorities for the year. He stated that he did discuss many of these issues at that meeting, as did other local merchants. Ms. Glassman stated that this issue would be resolved this year, although he does not feel that has happened.

Mr. Peterson asked if parking volunteers behind the band shell would help alleviate the problem. Mr. Boyle stated that many other steps need to be taken, although this is a simple compromise that would help. Ms. Floroski stated many compromises have been tried. It now needs to be at the organization stage. She feels that Iron Horse Boulevard needs to be utilized.

Chairman Deming stated that it sounds like some events need to be moved to a different location. Ms. Floroski stated that the Board of Selectmen and the Zoning Commission need to hear these complaints. Chairman Deming asked Mr. Boyle to write a list of events and how they adversely affect his business and which events affect him the most. There may be options for holding these events elsewhere. Mr. Boyle stated that he is not asking that these events be moved out of downtown, but Iron Horse could be better utilized.

Commissioner Haase stated that volunteer parking is a big issue that needs to be addressed even if an event has already been approved. Commissioner Minor stated that the people that are approving these events need to have people make compromises or the event should not be held. Commissioner Haase suggested that Gerry Toner, Dave Ryan, the Chief of Police and a representative from the Zoning Commission and the Board of Selectmen meet to discuss this issue.

5. Status of PAD, Charrette, Tax Abatement Program, Regional Economic Development Concept (Hiram Peck)

Mr. Peck distributed the draft PAD regulation that the Subcommittee is working on; other changes will be coming in soon. The question regarding Section Four of the regulation and what suggestions the members had regarding additional standards or changes to the standards that are currently in the draft regulation were never answered. He stated that Bob Sikowski will attend the next meeting. Mr. Peck stated that there will be a public meeting called by the Subcommittee in the middle of July and the Zoning Commission will then need to set a public hearing after that.

Commissioner Peterson stated that he feels this needs to get back to the Zoning Commission as soon as possible. He feels that there are conflicts of personal feelings whether there needs to be details in the standards or not; he is unsure how this will get resolved.

Mr. Peck stated that the Charrette process is schedule to go forward September 11th – 16th and will be held at the Simsbury Library. On August 10th and 11th, two members of the Charrette team will be in Town. There will be a kick-off meeting on August 10th to make the public aware of the process. Mr. Peck stated that there are seven different firms involved in the Charrette team from all over the country.

Mr. Peck stated that the Town has received several grants; many other things will be happening at the same time as the Charrette. Environmental issues, storm water issues and historic preservation issues will also be looked at during this same time period. This will all tie together into the Charrette process.

Regarding the tax abatement program, Mr. Peck stated that he is getting information from other communities in order to decide if this program should continue or not. He stated that he is looking for comments from the EDC, as well as other Boards, regarding if this program should stay in place. He stated that there are questions regarding if development would take place anyway and if people come in after the fact looking for tax abatement after the project is completed. He stated that the purpose of the program is to incentivize development in Town. There needs to be a timely mechanism so the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance can contemplate how much money needs to go toward this. At a minimum, he feels that this program needs to be restructured. Mr. Peck stated that he is interested in any comments that the EDC may have regarding this program. Regarding the regional economic development concept, Mr. Peck distributed SEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies) and summary requirements and also several examples of the plan. He stated that one of the mechanisms could be to move this concept through the Farmington Valley Collaborative. Surrounding Towns need to get on board with this in order for it to have a better chance of moving forward. He asked that the Commission members review this information and comment on whether or not they feel that this is worth pursuing.

Chairman Deming questioned if these regional plans were set up so that the Town can get Federal money. Mr. Peck stated that is correct. There is no place in Connecticut that has a regional plan; no place currently qualifies for this money.

Mr. Peck stated that the gas station on West Street was before the Design

Review Board several days ago for their new sign. The original sign was for a plastic sign that the DRB had several issues with. The applicant will now be having a special hand-made Cedar sign made. Mr. Peck stated that there is still an issue regarding the sticker signs that are on the gas pumps. Another issue is the lighting under the canopy not being too bright.

Regarding the Getty Station on Hopmeadow Street, Mr. Peck stated that he has spoken with the owner several times. He stated that they are not interested in selling this property; they are looking to put in another gas station.

Mr. Peck stated that a great restaurant, 2t, has been approved in Tariffville. It is located in at the Mill. Their signage consists of logos on two awnings. The restaurant should be opening soon.

Regarding the Wagner property, Ms. Floroski stated that Mr. Wagner is exploring all options for this property.

Mr. Peck stated that two medical office buildings have been approved for Dorset Crossing. Things are moving forward. They are currently going through the State Traffic Commission process for the driveway; the driveway will be approximately 500 feet away from the existing traffic light. They are hopeful that they can break ground this year.

Ms. Floroski stated that for the past five years, Main Street has subcontracted out from the Symphony to handle the vending on and off site. Simsbury businesses are the only on-site vendors; off-site they try to create packages with hotels to help drive business to local merchants. She stated that they are in the midst of working things out this year with the Performing Arts Center. They have drafted a memo of understanding that the Town and the Symphony will hopefully both sign. She stated that Main Street Partnership is planning on doing the vending this year. Although this is a great deal of work and is of no profit to them, Main Street Partnership feels that it is important that Simsbury businesses are represented. She is hopeful that they can continue this relationship; contractually, the Town has changed some of the wording in the contract where the Town has taken over handling the vending. She stated that their concern is that outside vendors come on site.

6. New Business/Old Business

Commissioner Crimmins stated that he distributed a Wall Street Journal article around regarding home based businesses. He questioned if this was something to put the welcome mat out for or not. He feels that this would be simple to do through the Chamber or on the website.

Mr. Peck felt that this was a good idea. Home based businesses are becoming more and more common. The concern is when more and more customers or delivery trucks come to a residence. Commissioner Crimmins stated that the guidelines are in the Zoning Regulations. He suggested highlighting which businesses are appropriate and what the process is for getting a business approved. Mr. Peck stated that home offices are fine, although the term home business has a different connotation. This is not what the Regulations originally intended.

7. Status of Airport Study (Lou George)

There was no report.

8. Adjournment

Commissioner Crimmins made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 a.m. Commissioner Peterson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.