

From: Lois Laczko September 15, 2008 9:39:57 AM
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To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
July 10, 2008
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission was called to order at 7:30 AM in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Chairman Thomas Frank and Commission members Mark Deming, Nancy Haase, Derek Peterson, Alan Levesque, Alan Needham, Lou George and Kevin Crimmins were present. Also in attendance were Alison Sturgeon, Commission Clerk, as well as other interested parties.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MAY 8, 2008, JUNE 12, 2008 AND JUNE 18, 2008

Commissioner Crimmins made a motion to approve the May 8, 2008 minutes as written. Commissioner Levesque seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Deming made a motion to approve the June 12, 2008 minutes as written. Commissioner Crimmins seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Haase made a motion to approve the June 18, 2008 minutes as written. Commissioner Deming seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. PRESENTATION BY TOM MARTIN, PRESIDENT, PHONON CORPORATION, 90 WOLCOTT ROAD, SIMSBURY

Jim Smith, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Phonon made a presentation to the Commission. He stated that Phonon was founded in 1982 in Simsbury. They are a design and manufacturer of surface acoustic wave microcircuits for the defense and space industries. Mr. Smith stated that they now need to expand their building because of growth in the company.

Mr. Smith showed the Commission a slide presentation, including pictures of the products that they make on site. He stated that the existing building is 15,000 s.f. on a 1.5 acre site. They currently have 2 clean room labs, offices and a test area. They would like to double the size of the current building; it is not practical for them to build up. He showed the Commission members the Site Plan that was approved by the Zoning Commission in 2006. They have recently received a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals and would now like to move forward. They are now proposing a 20,000 s.f. building on 3 floors behind the existing building; the construction will stay consistent with the existing building. They will also be providing parking for 90 cars with a second driveway. He stated that it is critical that they connect to the gas and sewers.

Mr. Smith discussed the differences between the Zoning variance that they received in 2006 versus the variance they received in 2008. He stated that the biggest variance was for the 87% non-permeable surface area. Commissioner Peterson questioned what the coverage was of the current building and what it would be with the addition. Mr. Smith stated that, currently, 47% of the 1.5 acres is non-permeable.

Commissioner Needham questioned if sewers existed on this property. Mr. Smith stated that there is a sewer line, although it needs to be extended. There is a septic tank under the lot in the back of the building, although with this proposal, that would have to come out so they can hook up to the sewer. Mary Glassman stated that the sewers were not done previously because they were not scheduled to be done. They are now on the schedule. Chairman Frank stated that the EDC will be monitoring the issue of the sewers and questioned what else they might do. Commissioner George suggested that this Commission write a letter to the Water Pollution Control.

Mr. Smith and the Commission members discussed the airport expansion. Commissioner Deming questioned if it would be a problem for Phonon if the airport was expanded. Mr. Smith did not think this would be a problem for them because it is far enough away from their property.

Commissioner George made a motion that the Economic Development Commission give the Chairman the authority to draft a letter to the Water Pollution Control stating that they would like them to consider, by whatever means possible, moving this sewer proposal up in their schedule. Commissioner Crimmins seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

IV. DISCUSSION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN SPONSORED BY THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Chairman Frank distributed a handout to the Commission. He stated that he

would like to have a discussion as to whether they should or should not consider a Economic Development Plan, and if so, what the process would be.

Chairman Frank discussed questions regarding an Economic Development Plan for Simsbury including:

" Should the EDC initiate a process to prepare an updated Plan of Economic Development?

" If yes, what process should be utilized to prepare such a Plan?

" What additional human and financial resources would be required to prepare and manage implementation of such a Plan...and how can that be funded?

Chairman Frank then discussed why the EDC should consider taking a leadership role in preparation of a Plan for Economic Development. He stated that first of all, the POCD for Simsbury has asked the EDC to prepare this Plan on Page 108, Policy 1, Objective A, which he read to the Commission. He stated that First Selectwoman, Mary Glassman, has also asked the EDC to prepare such a Plan. Chairman Frank stated that the existing Plan is 13 years old, which he will be sending to each Commission member for their review. He also stated that the POCD calls for reduction of the tax burden on property owners by growing the grand list through expanding economic development strategies. This will not be possible without a coherent and well organized Plan. He stated that the Planning Commission is devoting a great deal of time regarding the implementation of the POCD.

Chairman Frank then discussed what would be the substance of an updated Plan for Economic Development in Simsbury, which included:

" Quantification of economic development potential for: (a) town center; (b) northern gateway; and (c) southern gateway

" Views of the citizens...what types of economic development are desired in our Town. Chairman Frank stated that this was a suggestion made by Mike Long, who feels strongly that the EDC should ask for the views of the citizens and incorporate these views.

" Quantified and realistic objectives for Grand List expansion

" A review of the Town's economic development weaknesses and how to correct them

" Preferred strategies for in-fill and re-development in Town Center, gateways and airport

" Action Plans, timetables and resource requirements to implement the Plan. Chairman Frank stated that they would need to discuss who would be doing this work, also.

Chairman Frank stated that this is an enormous task that the EDC does not

have the resources for.

Regarding the views of the citizens, Commissioner Deming stated that he believes that the citizens are waiting for the Charrette process. Commissioner George stated that he feels that the landowners are more important than the citizens because they have already made an investment and own their property.

Commissioner Deming stated that if the Town goes forward with the Charrette process, the Town needs to decide how it will resolve the conflict between business interests and the citizen outlook. Commissioner Haase stated that although it is nice to know what the Town wants and what businesses want, they need a clear picture of the sustainability of the projects based on the market.

Commissioner Needham stated that the Charrette should answer the questions regarding marketability as well as business and citizen disagreements, although, he feels that if the Charrette is only for a small area of Town, there still might be some unanswered questions.

Mr. Peck stated that he has gotten the proposals back from the RFQ from a number of firms from all over the country. There are a number of firms that have some very unique consensus building techniques built into their process, which helps to bridge the gap between the different opinions of all the parties. He stated that he is still very concerned about the funding for this process. The EDC discussed the funding for the Charrette, which will be anywhere between \$100,000 - \$500,000. Commissioner Needham feels that Simsbury will be paid back rather quickly with the development that the Charrette process will result in.

Chairman Frank questioned the EDC members regarding what, if anything, should this Commission do regarding addressing the critical issue of the perception of Simsbury.

Mr. Jansen stated that the EDC's mission is to educate the Town. He stated that many people just do not understand. He suggested that the EDC members start working together and go to other Town meetings to help people understand. Sarah Floroski stated that the Main Street Partnership recently had a Business Owners Meeting, which many people attended. She stated that if approached in the right way, people are willing to listen. Commissioner Haase stated that she attended that meeting and was very encouraged. She stated that the EDC may create a Plan, but she feels that the Charrette process needs to be the beginning layer. She questioned if the Charrette was moving forward as scheduled. Mr. Peck stated that it is still quite close to its original timeframe. He is hopeful that a Regulation will be in place by the end of the year. If the funding is in

place, they will be in good shape, although it will still take the coordination of the Land Use Commissions to support this process.

Chairman Frank questioned how the EDC might help in this process. Mr. Peck stated that it would be most helpful for EDC members to present something on the record at other Town meetings if they are in support of certain projects. Commissioner Crimmins stated that the key element, but not the whole answer, is going to these meetings. He feels that the biggest part of the perception problem in Simsbury is misperception. He stated that the EDC needs to highlight the good, which is part of managing the message. He believes that the EDC can be responsive and they can also set the tone for specific projects.

V. PRESENTATION OF BRANDING PROGRAM PLANS SPONSORED BY SIMSBURY MAIN STREET PARTNERSHIP (Sarah Floroski)

Ms. Floroski stated that in 2006, Main Street Partnership sponsored the Town's successful designation as a Preserve America Community. This is a Federal designation, which recognizes communities that have preserved their historic assets, that have promoted heritage tourism and that have done a good job protecting, keeping and preserving what their Town really is. Ms. Floroski stated that by getting this designation, it opened up sources for grant money.

Ms. Floroski explained the comprehensive branding campaign for Simsbury. She stated that they received proposals for the branding campaign and accepted the best talent, which was from a Simsbury resident.

In her presentation, Ms. Floroski discussed the following:

- " Identifying who they wanted to target
- " Identifying the active interests and commercial interests and how they overlap
- " Inventory of assets
- " Identifying the strengths and weaknesses as a Town
- " Identifying opportunities
- " Identifying threats
- " Identifying regional efforts
- " Qualities of a great brand

Ms. Floroski stated that the three qualities of a great brand are character, place and community. She then distributed what Main Street Partnership has been working on. They are putting together a downtown map, a brochure, etc. She stated that everything will complement each other. In summary, the brand is heritage, charm and adventure, which make Simsbury unique.

VI. PRESENTATION OF KEYSTONE APPLICATION (Hiram Peck)

Chairman Frank stated the he attended the Planning Commission meeting this week, at which he was confronted by a member of SHARE who wanted to know the EDC's position regarding Dorset Crossing. He stated that he did not respond on behalf of the EDC.

Mr. Peck stated that he has written several memos regarding the issues of Dorset Crossing, including addressing wrong information on the project. He stated that there is a lot of misinformation going around. He stated that he would send these memos to the EDC members for their review.

Mr. Peck stated that the Hoffman application as well as the Dorset Crossing application will be before the Zoning Commission at their July 21st meeting. If the EDC is in support of these projects, they could send a letter of support or go to this meeting and speak.

Mr. Peck explained the Dorset Crossing application to the Commission members. He stated that the Zoning Commission will be reviewing the text amendment and the zone change at their next meeting.

Commissioner Needham question if the text amendment would apply to all B-3 zones in Town or just for Dorset Crossing. Mr. Peck stated it would be for all B-3s, although someone could apply for a variance if needed. Commissioner Needham stated that this zone change changes the Regulations in a small way for the entire Town. Mr. Peck stated that all of the B-3 zones in Simsbury equal 65 acres; only 65 acres would be affected by this change.

Commissioner Needham stated that if the EDC endorsed any project, they would then be endorsing the design aspects and all of the aspects of that project. He stated that before they endorse anything, he hopes that all of the EDC members would do their homework to understand what they are endorsing. He suggested that the EDC should only endorse the economic aspects. Commissioner Crimmins stated that he does not feel that the EDC would ever issue a letter stating that they endorse a project or not. He feels that the EDC has an obligation to voice their concerns regarding any project and the economic issues, good or bad, that it may have.

Chairman Frank stated that the EDC needs to make a decision regarding the Dorset Crossing and Hoffman applications. Commissioner George stated that he feels that they have enough information regarding Dorset Crossing because they came to the EDC and made a presentation.

Commissioner Haase suggested that the EDC write a letter without a specific

endorsement but with a reference to the economic impacts. She also feels that an EDC member should speak at the Zoning meeting regarding this application.

Regarding the zone change for Dorset Crossing, Mr. Peck stated that the rezoning of the property and the application are all in conformance with the POCD. Mr. Jansen stated that because of the private roads for this project, it is less of a burden to Simsbury. He suggested that they put that in their letter also. Commissioner Peterson stated that how this increases the Grand List, which dovetails into the POCD, should be one of their main points. Ms. Glassman stated that this information could be provided from the Tax Office.

Commissioner Deming made a motion that the Economic Development Commission Chairman draft a letter to the Land Use Commissions highlighting the economic impacts of Dorset Crossing and the impacts on the Grand List. This letter should also state that the project is in compliance with the 2007 POCD, as well as the other items mentioned during this meeting. Commissioner Crimmins seconded the motion.

Commissioner Needham stated that he will be voting no to this motion because he has not had the opportunity to read Mr. Peck's memos and also because he does not know enough about the economic impacts.

Commissioner Haase stated that Mr. Peck has reviewed this project and she is relying on his professional evaluation of this project in regard to having a deep understanding of the POCD.

The motion passed unanimously, except for Commissioner Needham, who was opposed.

Regarding public hearings, Chairman Frank stated that it would be useful for the EDC to begin the practice of expressing their views in writing as well as speaking at these meetings. He asked for any volunteers who would want to speak at the July 21st public hearing. Commissioner Haase stated that the more members that could attend these public hearings the better. Commissioner Peterson suggested that all of the EDC members sit together in support of the one member who would do the speaking; this would strengthen that one voice. Commissioner Deming suggested that the speaker use the letter that the Chairman will be writing as speaking points to follow. Commissioner Deming volunteered to speak at that meeting.

Regarding the Hoffman application, Commissioner Haase stated that it would be a disservice to speak regarding the Dorset Crossing application and not the Hoffman application.

Mr. Peck discussed the basic issues regarding the Hoffman application. He stated that they would like to purchase the Markie property in order to have more inventory storage. After some revisions, the parking area is now under one acre and the rest is open space. He stated that the applicant is continuing to make changes. Mr. Peck stated that the application is proceeding in a positive direction and he is hopeful that the Zoning Commission will close and approve this application at their July 21st meeting.

Chairman Frank stated that the POCD supports expanding and developing existing businesses and Hoffman has been in the community for a long time. As a taxpayer, they are an important part of the economic fabric of the community and the expansion and development of this business largely related to the Nissan dealership is totally consistent with the POCD in terms of supporting the expansion of existing businesses while minimizing the impact on surrounding neighborhoods. On that basis alone, he feels that he would be in support of this project.

Commissioner Haase made a motion that the Chairman of the Economic Development Commission draft a letter to the Land Use Commissions highlighting the economic impacts of the Hoffman project. Commissioner Crimmins seconded the motion.

Commissioner Needham stated that because there is some controversy regarding this application, if this letter were to only talk about the economic issues, he would be able to support this motion.

Commissioner Deming volunteered to speak regarding the Hoffman application at the July 21st meeting.

Mr. Jansen stated that there is a misconception that the POCD states that the commercial development in this area will stop at the triangle. This is not the case. He stated that the Planning Commission had stated that eventually the triangle would probably be developed commercially; they did not say that Hoffman could not go back any further.

The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Frank stated that he will be drafting these two letters and will make them available to Commission Deming prior to the July 21st Zoning Commission meeting.

VII. UPDATE ON IMPROVEMENTS DESIRED FOR SIMSBURY WEB SITE (Nancy Haase or Kevin Crimmins)

A memo from Mary Glassman was distributed to the Commission members

regarding the information technology update. A schedule of CIOC and Town meetings was printed on the back of the memo highlighting important dates for Commission members.

Chairman Frank stated that there is a scheduled meeting in August, although they will only be having that meeting if there is a significant agenda.

Commissioner Deming questioned if the Town had made any progress in securing funding for the Charrette. Mr. Peck stated that they are currently working on this. Commissioner Levesque questioned if any support was needed at the Board of Selectmen meeting to consider going forward with the Charrette. Ms. Glassman stated that the Board of Selectmen had sent out the RFQ to see what the responses would be. Hiram is now in the process of reviewing those. At the next BOS meeting, they will be asked to send out the RFP. Ms. Glassman stated that it is still early in the process, although support is always good.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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