

From: Lois Laczko September 14, 2011 2:36:56 PM
Subject: Economic Development Commission Minutes 07/14/2011 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 14, 2011

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mark Deming, Chairman, called the regular meeting of the Economic Development to order on Thursday, July 14th at 7:34 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Town Offices. The following members were present: Derek Peterson, Kevin Crimmins, Gary Dornbush, Todd Burrick, Andrew Markowski, Louis George, and Timothy Ellsworth. Also in attendance were Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, Leslie Faraci, Commission Clerk and other interested parties.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - June 9, 2011

Commissioner Markowski moved to approve the minutes of June 9, 2011 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Burrick and passed unanimously.

III. REPORTS: SMSP, FVVA

SMSP - Sarah Nielsen, Executive Director of Simsbury Main Street Partnership started off by explaining how they handle the Talcott Mountain Music Festival, the vending on-site and arranging concert packages. Ms. Nielsen explained that Main Street Partnership's mission is to provide patrons with food options on-site and she said they try to give Simsbury businesses first preference and then if there is an outside request not met by a Simsbury business, they allow an outside business to fill that specific requirement. Ms. Nielsen spoke of the challenging summer season thus far for her vendors. The cancellation of a concert the week prior was difficult and contributed to decreased overall sales. Ms. Nielsen spoke highly of their partnership with Kane's Market. She mentioned J. Foster as a partner and referenced a new partnership with Joe Pizza. Ms. Nielsen referenced Starbuck's presence and Whole Food's Market, which will not be

selling, but sampling. Fitzgerald's and Andy's were both approached with the first right of refusal, as local businesses. Ms. Nielsen mentioned promoting restaurant's special concert menus and packages available online. Ms. Nielsen said they have been contracted by the PAC to handle the vending for the Iron Horse Series and they are currently in the second (2nd) concert out of five (5) concerts. Ms. Nielsen reminded the commission that Main Street Partnerships also runs the Simsbury Farmer's Market. She remarked how the Farmer's Market drives tourism to Simsbury and on a good Thursday, it can draw approximately 1,000 people. Over 21 weeks, Ms. Nielsen said, this generates quite a bit of business which supports local merchants as well as our local farms and is a real community oriented event featuring local entertainment as well. Ms. Nielsen wanted to make the commission aware of a new local business, Inca Arts, a Peruvian store that is an example of a small business benefiting from the exposure the Farmer's Market generates. Ms. Nielsen then said they are working with Richard Sawitzke and the Town of Simsbury on the Eno Hall renovations. Ms. Nielsen referenced a grant she wrote for \$90,000 that matches money going towards the capital improvement program at Eno. Kenyon & Cutler Architects has been chosen as the architects on the project and they are currently looking for a contractor. Bids for that are due in ten (10) days and interior renovations should be started within thirty (30) days. Ms. Nielsen expressed the excitement over this project, as a needs assessment, previously conducted, showed that the Senior Center needed to be expanded at Eno Hall. Ms. Nielsen referenced the Discover Simsbury section that had been given to commission members. She said the next edition will be coming out August 18th.

Commissioner Deming asked Ms. Nielsen if this publication is distributed throughout the Valley. Ms. Nielsen said it is distributed to subscription holders throughout Greater Hartford County (consisting of a subscription base of 55,000). An overrun of a couple thousand are distributed to shareholders, the Public Library, Farmers Market and other public locations.

Ms. Nielsen referenced the \$10,000 grant for the Charrette project and mentioned the \$8,000 ear-marked that would match whatever the town would provide for the design guidelines. She thanked the commission for ear-marking those funds towards the design guidelines. She said the grant has to be used up by September and so any help they can give Mr. Peck to make sure the Town moves forward on the design guidelines.

Ms. Nielsen then spoke about the Membership Mailing. This mailing went to all Simsbury residents listing summer events, which are also available on the web. She mentioned that there are not nearly as many residential members as there are business members.

Commissioner Dornbush questioned Ms. Nielsen on why the Simsbury Fire Department's Annual Golf Outing is held at an out-of-town private golf club (Blue Fox Run) as opposed to having it at Simsbury Farms, as a tax-payer funded golf course. Ms. Nielsen responded saying that this is an education issue. She referenced previous work with the PTA in order to bring fund raisers back to Simsbury. She said she can make the suggestion to change the venue in the future.

Commissioner Deming then asked about the merchant sales of the concerts that had taken place thus far this season. Ms. Nielsen said the first concert was the worst she has seen in seven (7) years, and it was the worst attended concert, by the Symphony, in at least seven (7) years. The concert held on July 1st, sales were where they should be. She said that with the Talcott Mountain when one (1) out of the five (5) concerts is cancelled it cuts into sales significantly.

Commissioner Dornbush asked if Manhattan Transfer was cancelled due to weather. Ms. Nielsen said that Hartford Theatre Company saw low sales the week leading up to the concert and since they had previous bad experience here, they cancelled. Ferg Jansen, liaison to the Planning Commission, then mentioned the recently added ability to purchase online ahead of time should help ticket sales.

Ms. Nielsen spoke of how residents wait until the last day to purchase tickets due to the fact they are worried about weather and that will be tough to combat. Another challenge is the previous food policies of people bringing coolers, works against the vendors on-site.

FVVA - Nancy Anstey, Executive Director of the Farmington Valley Visitors Association, said their biggest job at this point in the year is the completion of the 2012 Visitor's Guide, which should be out by October 2011. Ms. Anstey said they try to showcase each of the eight (8) towns included in the Farmington Valley Visitors Association as much as possible. Ms. Anstey said the second largest thing they are working on is the 2nd Annual Film Fete & Mixer, held on Friday, July 22nd at 7PM in Collinsville, which they are very excited about.

IV. SIMSBURY SHOWCASE - Media Exposure

Commissioner Peterson reported that he had contacted all of the publications on his list and New England Real Estate Journal (NEREJ) has shown the strongest interest thus far. Site Selection Magazine and Hartford Business Journal are also two (2) others on which he is looking to focus available funds in the form of advertising. A press release will be put out as well, but Commissioner Peterson would also like to put together an ad to compliment the press release. Commissioner Peterson did mention we have

missed the deadlines for NEREJ's EDC issue, however, the Metro Hartford Alliance Issue is coming up at the beginning of September and could be a good issue in which to place the ad. Commissioner Peterson will follow up with those on the media distribution list prior in order to the event to gauge interest in the event. He mentioned that they may see more coverage following the event. Ms. Nielsen said that in addition to the press release she will send out a media advisory immediately prior to the event to get increased coverage.

Commissioner Deming reminded everyone the Developers Showcase will be held on September 23, 8:30AM - 11:30AM at the Free Mason's Hall. The purpose is for the Town Planner to highlight the two (2) new land use regulations, the PAD and the Town Center Code. Breakfast will be provided, there will be a presentation and walking tours will be available. Maps will be provided to guide interested parties to specific parcels. Commissioner Deming said invitees include town's people, land owners, developers, builders, architects, etc.

Commissioner George then mentioned that commercial brokers are the most important people to have attend the event. Ms. Nielsen confirmed there were 15-20 brokers showing interest. She also has contacted International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC). Commissioner George stressed again that the brokers are the ones that will be key to driving interest. He also mentioned trying to get coverage in the Wall Street Journal in the form of a featured article could be a great way to gain exposure. Commissioner Peterson confirmed that he had reached out to WSJ with no response as of yet. Commissioner Peterson then mentioned that deadlines are approaching for August and September issues, so they need to get something together in the form of an ad.

Ms. Nielsen inquired about a budget and Commissioner Deming said the budget is \$1,200-\$1,800 specific to Simsbury Showcase. The event costs, outside of advertising, were discussed.

V. FINANCIAL MODELING

Commissioner Deming said this issue of financial modeling has been up for discussion since November and asked for comments/questions. Commissioner George said he does think it is important and a great idea, but that Board of Finance has to be the one to make the decision. Commissioner Deming agreed and said that on this issue, all the EDC can do is write a letter of recommendation. Commissioner Dornbush said the more people to bring it up, the better since it is a necessary tool.

Commissioner Crimmins moved that the EDC authorize Commissioner Deming to write a letter on the commission's behalf to the Board of Finance and Board

of Selectmen recommending that the Town adopt financial modeling as a tool that would help the Town to support the initiatives, not only of the Economic Development Commission, but of the Town in general to support the growth of our tax rolls. Commissioner Ellsworth seconded the motion, which was unanimously passed.

VI. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

WPCA - Hiram Peck referenced a preliminary draft letter he had written regarding the WPCA and potential connection charge for certain developments. Mr. Peck is not exactly sure who he will be sending this letter to, and he would like more comments on it from the commission members. Mr. Peck said the goal is not for the WPCA to upset their current fee schedule, but that it should take the current fee schedule structure and add to it consideration for PAD and the Town Center Code developments. He mentioned that the fee structure is based on a zoning map done in 1985, which is important because these two (2) classes of development have come in effect very recently. Mr. Peck then highlighted the important parts of the memo. Mr. Peck referenced some articles that he handed out to the commission. These articles are about the housing market and what is projected to come in the next decade. The conclusion of one of the articles referenced is that the continued development of large lot, single-family homes is not what is going to be what sells in the next ten (10) years. Mr. Peck said he took extra time in order to make sure his information was current, applicable data, written by trusted sources. They feel strongly that the smaller square footage, close-in and rental housing developments are what will be absorbed. Mr. Peck said the PAD and Town Center Code provide for denser developments that are already served by sewer and water. Mr. Peck said that is a strong part of the argument in asking the WPCA to consider these fee revisions. Mr. Peck then referenced a series of numbers used by the developer of the Hop Brook development (Landworks Development, LLC), in a proposal, of what would be a reasonable charge for the connection to their development. He reviewed that using a \$4,095/unit connection charge, the total for connecting to the sewer would be in excess of \$400,000. Mr. Peck highlighted the calculations shown on the proposal which calculates the total connection charge to \$242,637 which is approximately 60% of the original \$400,000. Mr. Peck said that it is clear we are not going to get 30 individual single-family homes connected (as projected by the WPCA), per year, in the next ten (10) years. Mr. Peck said why not try and get those units that could be lost otherwise, into the PAD and Town Center Code type developments and make up the difference. Mr. Peck said, with denser development there will be more flow to the sewer treatment plant, more connections and the number of dollars difference will be a plus to the Town and the WPCA. Mr. Peck did mention he thinks this is a reasonable proposal.

EDC AUGUST MEETING -

Commissioner Deming asked the commission if the August 11th meeting should be held or cancelled, as it has been in years past. It was agreed that it would be kept on the schedule.

Commissioner Deming then asked Mr. Peck about the design guidelines budget. Mr. Peck said he has the money as well as a contract from the potential consultant and that he is waiting on an answer from the First Selectmen because it has to be spent soon since it was in the budget. Commissioner Deming asked if the contract is accepted, would there be anything available, on a preliminary basis to bring to the September meeting. Mr. Peck said yes, there would be something available. Commissioner Deming asked if these would be called "guidelines" or "standards". Mr. Peck said, in his opinion, it should be "guidelines". Mr. Peck also said he thinks the Design Review Board will look at them as standards, but the Zoning Board will look at them as guidelines. Mr. Peck did mention he thinks there are land owners out there that are not aware of how friendly the regulations are in Town Center.

Commissioner Crimmins mentioned when people are looking around for potential opportunities, Simsbury is still struggling against an old reputation. Ms. Nielsen then credited Mr. Peck with getting national exposure, on WNPR and other media outlets, in terms of exposing how friendly Simsbury's regulations are now. Commissioner Crimmins agreed, but said there are still a number of people out there that have not been made aware of the changes. Ms. Nielsen referenced interested parties, looking to do mixed-use, that are waiting to hear about the WPCA and what is going to happen there.

Commissioner Dornbush said that the WPCA needs to consider what Mr. Peck has put forth, regarding the need to change their fee structure, and that moving this project forward is critical. Commissioner Dornbush said the longer time it drags out, the more chances they have to walk away from it. Commissioner Deming then said it seems as if a meeting between EDC, BOS and WPCA following the review of what Mr. Peck presents to them. Commissioner Deming said that WPCA will be looking years out on a longer term basis and will want to make sure they are not committing to a policy that will cause them to be shorted financially.

Commissioner George then stressed the importance of this issue and how it should be the top priority for the EDC, along with Simsbury Showcase.

Commissioner Ellsworth agreed and asked if a letter is sufficient in terms of action. Commissioner Deming then referenced a letter he had written that calls for action, in the form of an alternative solution, if the WPCA cannot make progress on a timely basis.

Commissioner Deming asked Mr. Peck if he would like the Board's feedback on his preliminary draft letter and Mr. Peck said yes, within the next couple days, so he can get the letter out Monday.

Commissioner Deming mentioned that Hop Brook is waiting on this to continue moving forward. Commissioner Ellsworth then questioned that once Mr. Peck's letter is out, should the Board then "mobilize" as opposed to waiting for the next regular meeting, which could be two (2) months away. It was then discussed by the Board about which is the most appropriate way to mobilize and get WPCA to move forward on this issue.

Commissioner Dornbush asked Mr. Peck how the WPCA will make up for a shortfall when, in 13 years, the projected housing units didn't take place. Mr. Peck replied that he is not sure how they plan for that, but that he thinks downtown density can make up for a significant part of that shortfall.

The Board again discussed the scheduling of a special meeting between EDC, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and WPCA. It was discussed which parties should be involved. The discussion resulted in the conclusion that a small working group might be more productive in working with the WPCA. Commissioner Deming then said he will contact the appropriate representatives from the previously mentioned groups and coordinate a meeting, hopefully scheduled sooner, rather than later. It was determined Commissioners Dornbush and Deming would be the representatives from the EDC. Commissioner Ellsworth asked to be kept informed on any meetings related to this issue in order to keep the members informed.

Commissioner George brought up the subject of the Town spending approximately \$500,000 on a reevaluation of properties, which will result in a conclusion that values have not changed in the past five (5) years to any great extent. It was mentioned that while it is state statute that the reevaluation needs to be done, but with the cycle we are currently in, it seems a waste of funds to do it. Commissioner George said that since the Budget is being re-worked, it could be another chance to change this statute, either on a state-wide level or on a local level. While he does not think this is necessarily an EDC item, he thinks it could be addressed and result in some easy savings. Commissioner Deming said that First Selectmen Mary Glassman, as serving on the Connecticut Council of Municipalities, is addressing the issue there.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Dornbush made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 a.m. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Crimmins and was passed unanimously.

Mark E. Deming, Chairman