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To: SimsburyCT\_EconMin  
Cc:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES  
July 30, 2009  
SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Deming called the special 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 Petersen, Nancy Haase, Lou George and Chuck Minor were present.

2. Discussion on issues that the Economic Development Commission thinks is important for the Charrette to take into consideration.

Chairman Deming stated that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the issues of importance to forward to the Charette consultants for their consideration as they go through this process. He would like the Commission members to come up with a letter for Mr. Peck to deliver to the consultant.

Chairman Deming highlighted his suggestions, which were: 1) flexible parking regulations for Town Center; 2) integration of Simsbury Meadows/ Iron Horse Boulevard center, future development of Simsbury Meadows through the use of pedestrian connections; 3) preparation for future integration of the Ensign Bickford and Town Center and how this could be connected to the Town; 4) public transportation hub, designate an area for better connection for people who use the bus system from Hartford; 5) comprehensive pedestrian walkway network – an east/west connection would be better; 6) Town green, square or center – as the Town develops, events could be held here; 7) residential zoning for Town Center.

Commissioner Peterson suggested eliminating the things that are already in the POCD. Commissioner George stated that he feels those things should be highlighted in order to reinforce certain issues.

Commissioner Minor stated that parking needs to be built in for big events. Commissioner George stated that he has suggested, in the past, to have

satellite parking with a shuttle.

Commissioner Crimmins questioned if there were any suggestions where to place a Town green or a parking area. Commissioner George stated that it could be on the other side of Iron Horse; it could match up with the Performing Arts Center. Commissioner Minor agreed that it would promote economic development if the green was located in this area. Commissioner Crimmins stated that a Town green could be located at the Massaco plantation or Schultz Park. Both of these areas would be good locations.

Commissioner George stated that there is a big difference between a fair ground and a Town green. He feels that they should be discussing an event area. Chairman Deming stated that it could be a designated area of public open space for multiple uses.

Commissioner George questioned if St. Mary's fair and other like events should be part of the downtown area. From an economic standpoint, they need to bring people into the downtown, although they do not want to do this to the sacrifice of small business owners.

Commissioner George stated that he agrees with flexible parking regulations for the Town Center; the integration of Simsbury Meadows/Iron Horse Boulevard/Town Center and future development of Simsbury Meadows; and the preparation for future integration of Ensign Bickford and Town Center.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that he agrees with infill. He also agrees that they need to make sure that parking is available for events. He does not think that it is realistic that parking could be remote; people in this community are not looking to walk any distances. Commissioner George agreed. He is hopeful that the consultant will have some ideas regarding this issue. He questioned why people are willing to walk in West Hartford Center, but not in Simsbury. The Commission discussed West Hartford Center and Blue Back Square regarding retail, parking and walkability. Commissioner George stated that the key is to figure out how to transfer Simsbury's downtown from a vehicular community to more of a walking, pedestrian friendly environment. He stated that Simsbury does not have the typical center where two main roads intersect, although there are main roads on the outside and cross roads on the inside where infill can be done.

Regarding traffic and direction, Commissioner Haase questioned if Welden Road will become a 2-way street. She suggested a review of one-way streets in Town.

Regarding the Aquarian building, Commissioner Haase stated that she feels this needs to be on the tax base. Chairman Deming stated that the issue

with this building is that there is no parking.

Mr. Peck questioned if this Commission is in favor of optimizing commercial activity in the downtown area with infill being a part of this.

Commissioner George suggested eliminating zoning regulations that make it difficult for infill, in terms of coverages. Commissioner Crimmins stated that they should also make a statement regarding mixed uses. Without residential, the element that is missing to have a walkable downtown is the people who would live there. Commissioner George stated that currently, the Zoning Regulations do not allow for individual zone living.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that an example of where infill would be appropriate would be the Bank of America and Eno Memorial Hall.

Chairman Deming stated that Mr. Jansen is in the audience; he is representing the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Jansen asked the Commission to imagine Andy's with residential on the third floor and law offices on the second floor with retail out in front. He stated that this will change the dynamics of walkability. Businesses will do better.

Commissioner George stated that if they have infill, this will eliminate parking lots, although in the short term, he feels that this will make business owners nervous.

Regarding design considerations, Mr. Peck stated that parking lots need to be used as parking lots and have development over them.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that when there is added development, there needs to be a combination of retail, office, residential and an anchor. Commissioner George asked him to define anchor. Commissioner Crimmins stated that an anchor needs to be a bigger name retail in order to attract people. Commissioner George disagreed. He feels that the anchor could be the Iron Horse meadow area. He feels that this would attract people for different reasons. Commissioner George stated that they need to get residential and also industries, such as medical offices, to the Town Center.

Commissioner Haase stated that the Town needs to connect to the residents and what they want. They need to find out why people are leaving the downtown and going elsewhere. Commissioner Crimmins agreed, although he stated that personalized shops will not make it unless there is a bigger attraction store. Chairman Deming stated that retail is always changing. The downtown area needs to be flexible and adaptable. Commissioner Haase questioned if there would be someone in the retail and leasing business as part of the Charrette process. Mr. Peck stated that there would be. He stated that once the structure is created, the regulations need to be flexible regarding uses. Mr. Jansen stated that being flexible is most

important for economic development.

The Commissioner members discussed the boundaries of the downtown area. Commissioner Peterson stated that if Ensign Bickford comes into play, it would be a natural boundary. Commissioner Minor questioned if this would be too big an area. Commissioner Haase stated that the Town needs to look long term to the Ensign Bickford property. The Commission agreed that Ensign Bickford should be tied in with the long term plan. Mr. Peck stated that the Town may end up with a code of the Town Center and sub-districts of that code.

Regarding parking, Chairman Deming stated that he feels it is important to establish a transportation hub if parking disappears because of infill development. He stated that there cannot be infill development without providing other parking. Mr. Jansen suggested having bicycle racks at the transportation hub. There was a consensus among the Commission members that a transportation hub should be considered.

Mr. Jansen stated he feels the forgotten asset of Simsbury is the River. This could be an attraction for dining. He is hopeful that the River will be incorporated in the Charrette.

The Commission agreed that a fairground is a priority; a Town green is not. Walkability and connectivity is also desirable and is something the Commission members would like integrated into the Charrette process. Optimization of commercial and mixed use downtown; flexibility parking; infill; flexibility of use of building; integration of Simsbury meadows; eventual integration of Ensign Bickford property and West Street; and providing for a future public transportation hub should be included in what is important regarding the Charrette. Commissioner Peterson stated that he does not like the term "transportation hub". Commissioner Minor stated that they should also include that parking should specifically address event parking and also making the bike path more east/west accessible. Commissioner George stated that they also need to encourage residential zoning in the Center Zone. He stated that there should also be some type of emphasis on providing flexible zoning regulations to allow these things to happen. The number one idea, from an economic development standpoint, is that this Commission would like more walkability and a more pedestrian friendly downtown. This would be a place where developers want to develop.

Commissioner Crimmins stated his ideas for discussion is that any regulation emanating from the Charrette process must contain a clear statement that Simsbury is: 1) in favor of rational development; 2) welcoming to commercial and mixed use development of available (vacant) parcels; 3) in favor of modernization and re-development of parcels on which aging structures have outlived their original uses; 4) the Town

should make a definitive statement in its land use regulations that the regulations are reflective of the best interests of the Town and all of the divers interests contained within the Town; 5) it must be made clear to all Charrette participants that while the focus of the immediate process is on the Town Center, additional similar regulations applicable to other commercially developable areas of the Town must and will be developed separately. He feels that the EDC should: 1) take a position on the desirability of permissive mixed used zoning regulations – strongly in favor of it; 2) encourage the Charrette participants to strive for a regulation that leaves considerable discretion in the land use Boards, enabling them to conduct their important work in ways that are specific to the projects before them; and 3) discourage prescriptive or proscriptive terminology.

Chairman Deming stated that the Commission will continue this discussion at their meeting on August 13th.

### 3. Adjournment

Commissioner Haase made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 am. Commissioner Crimmins seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.