

From: Lois Laczko November 17, 2008 1:07:51 PM  
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To: SimsburyCT\_EconMin  
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES  
August 14, 2008  
SPECIAL MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special 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, Derek Peterson, Alan Needham, Chuck Minor and Kevin Crimmins were present.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - July 10, 2008

Commissioner Needham made one edit to the July 10th minutes.

Commissioner Crimmins made a motion to approve the July 10, 2008 minutes as amended. Commissioner Minor seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. RESPONSE TO MARY GLASSMAN'S MEMO DATED JULY 9, 2008 REGARDING EDC SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SECTION OF THE TOWN WEB SITE (KEVIN CRIMMINS and/or NANCY HAASE)

Commissioner Crimmins passed out a handout which was a composition of everyone's comments regarding the web site. He indicated that it is not too late to submit comments. After a short discussion, it was agreed that in the short term, Kevin would meet with the Virtual Town Hall representative who does the Town's web site, and give him the EDCs comments for incorporation. In the long term, Mary Glassman indicated that a professional consultant would probably be brought in to assist with major web site improvements.

Commissioner Crimmins suggested that the Commission take the summary and other input that was given this morning, and get underway with some simple changes to the EDC section of the Virtual Town Hall site. Ms. Glassman

supported his suggestion. She stated that they have hired a consultant to look at the website regarding how they might add maps and other things to the website. She will be having a meeting on September 8th with that consultant.

Chairman Frank stated that the EDC has been discussing this issue for years and would like to make some improvements now, without having the timetable of the larger projects slow them down. Ms. Glassman stated that the changes to the website can be done very quickly; there are internal capacities to change things overnight. She stated that currently, there is a lot of great information on the website, although it is not very organized.

#### IV. STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY, SIMSBURY MEADOWS AREA (LOU GEORGE and/or MARK DEMING)

Commissioner Deming stated that a rough draft of the information collected will be given to Rich Sawitzke by the end of next week for his review.

#### V. RESOLUTION OF LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS OF EDC MEMBERS TO OTHER BOARDS/ COMMISSIONS (ALAN NEEDHAM)

Commissioner Needham stated that there have been several suggestions to establish liaisons with the Land Use Commissions and other groups that seem to be appropriate for EDC purposes. He suggested that they should officially name members to be liaisons for specific groups. That person would then be responsible for reviewing agendas and also going to the meetings. If there is something pertinent to what the EDC is working on, then that member can report back to this Commission.

Commissioner Needham suggested that the following Commissions should have liaisons: Planning Commission; Zoning Commission, the Chamber of Commerce; Main Street Partnership; and Board of Selectmen. He stated that he would be interested in being the liaison to either the Planning or Zoning Commission and Commissioner George had showed some interest in being the liaison to the Chamber. Because Chairman Frank would like to continue to work closely with the Planning process and because he has already attended many Planning Commission meetings, he volunteered to be the liaison for the Planning Commission. Commissioner Needham would be liaison for the Zoning Commission. Commissioner Haase is already working with Main Street Partnership and Commissioner Minor volunteered to be the liaison to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Peck stated that they might want to consider having a liaison for the Design Review Board, also; that Board meets right before the Planning Commission. Mr. Peck also stated that the liaisons need to be careful

about contacting commission members regarding specific applications during the public hearing process. Communication can be done through Town Staff or through correspondence and letters, which will become part of the record.

VI. RESPONSE TO MHA FOR A LIST OF PRIORITY ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENT OF POINT PERSON...SEE JUNE 12TH MINUTES FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC (COMMISSIONERS)

Chairman Frank stated that at the June 12th meeting, this Commission indicated that they would like to put a list of priority activities together that they would like Metro Hartford Alliance to do for Simsbury and possibly reactivate their relationship with MHA in terms of paying a monthly fee.

Mr. Vose, Metro Hartford Alliance, stated that some of these priorities are things that MHA already does as part of the membership; if there are other things that need to be done, they can do them or suggest other ways of accomplishing them. Regarding the prior contract, he stated that MHA was instructed to work through the Chairman and the First Selectmen. If this is the way the EDC wants thing to continue, he asked that they discuss how that would work administratively. Chairman Frank stated that he would not be comfortable with that kind of an arrangement. He feels that the Commission, as a whole, should be involved. Also, he stated that he sees the website to be a prime candidate for the use of MHA. MHA should be able to tell this Commission what their website should look like.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that the EDC has a good relationship with MHA. Mr. Vose has given this Commission good advice when needed, although, he does not see that they are currently having any problems with how to deal with any particular issue. When the need arises, he feels that they can then decide to work with MHA on a case by case basis.

Commissioner Minor questioned if the EDC was still members of MHA. Chairman Frank stated that they were. Commissioner Minor also questioned what their options were regarding the contract that has been suspended. Ms. Glassman stated that when reviewing the contract between the EDC and MHA, it was noted that the contract had not been utilized to its full potential. MHA was waiting for direction from the Town, which they have not been getting. She stated that there are many options. This Commission would like to make many things happen in Simsbury, i.e. the website; the economic development plan, etc. Ms. Glassman suggested a meeting with members and staff to discuss what the EDC would like to see happen in Town from an economic development standpoint and what MHA can do without additional fees. This will help them decide what consulting fees are needed to accomplish these goals. Chairman Frank stated that because the

contract was suspended, they still have a contractual obligation to MHA. He feels that MHA has several options: they can let the Town opt out of the contract; they could make the Town finish paying for the contract; or they could do more work for the four months pay until the contract would have expired. Commissioner Minor stated that he believes they should only use MHA on an as needed basis, over and above their membership.

Commissioner Deming stated that he believes as a small Town, they need to have eyes and ears that go beyond the community in order to have a better understanding of how Simsbury fits into the greater Hartford area. This can be done internally or someone can be hired to do this. He stated that MHA has been a great resource when needed. He asked Mr. Vose to talk about the levels of service that are available to the EDC. Mr. Vose stated that basic MHA membership charges 20 cents per capita for all Towns; with this comes many services. Anything above these services, they will give an estimate for. He stated that he would make a list of services available for the EDC's review.

Commissioner Peterson stated that it is important to see where Simsbury fits in within the Farmington Valley and the State of Connecticut. He does not want Simsbury to be left behind.

Commissioner Deming suggested that they continue their membership with MHA. Regarding the Charrette, he suggested that MHA could help them along and they could finish the four months of their contract in this way.

Mr. Vose stated that, except for the April payment, which is still needed, the contract that was suspended between the MHA and the EDC is seen as being terminated. He stated that when final decisions are made, the MHA is here to help in any way possible. Mr. Peck questioned if MHA works with DECD (Department of Economic and Community Development), which Mr. Vose stated that they did.

Commissioner Crimmins questioned if Simsbury was missing out on things that MHA might do for other Towns. Mr. Peck stated that the coalition with the DECD is very important now and will be in the future. The Town is currently working to try to bring programs to Simsbury through DECD.

There was a consensus that the EDC would remain members of MHA and would draw on their resources on an as needed basis in the future.

#### VII. BRIEF UPDATE ON STATUS OF CHARRETTE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SURVEY (HIRAM PECK)

Mr. Peck stated that the RFPs went out to 8 firms; their responses are due back by August 18th. The Town will then know how each firm will approach

the Charrette process, specifically with regard to funding. He stated that several firms have called asking about background information about Simsbury, various views that people have about the Town and the environmental and economic prospective, development thoughts, etc. Mr. Peck stated that one firm has already dropped out because the project is too big with not a big enough timeframe. Two firms will be teaming up to put together one proposal. He is hopeful that the Town will receive 4-6 proposals.

Regarding the Charrette Committee that is being formed, Mr. Peck stated that Ms. Glassman will Chair this Committee with two members of the BOS and the Chairman or a designee from each of the Land Use Commissions with other Boards and Commissions sitting on this Committee as well. The Committee will meet a few days after the proposals are reviewed in order for him to put together a summary for the Committee's review. These meetings will be open to the public.

Chairman Frank stated that he will be sitting on this Charrette Committee. He questioned if there was another member of the EDC that might be interested in attending the meetings as well. Commissioners Deming and Needham stated that they were interested in attending the meetings.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Committee will need to have a good sense of how much land is left to develop, where that land is, and then they can hire the consultants to map out a plan for how to develop that land. The first meeting of the Charrette Committee will be to review the matrix, to decide which consultants to bring in for an interview, and to decide how much funding is needed. The follow-up meetings will be to make sure they invite the public in so they understand what is happening. Regarding the timetable, Mr. Peck stated that he is hopeful that this process will be done by February or March; this is when the final regulation will go back to the Zoning Commission for adoption.

Regarding the Economic Development Survey, Mr. Peck stated that they have sent out approximately 50 letters asking for interest with regard to polling activities with respect to the economic development survey. He stated that they did not receive any responses. Most of the firms stated that they were not interested. The University of Connecticut recommended Pulsar, from Vernon, who has done polling for UCONN in the past. Mr. Peck stated that he and Ms. Glassman have a meeting with them today to talk about what they could do and how quickly it could be done. This information will be used by the consultant that is selected for the Charrette.

Commissioner Needham stated that he is not convinced that this survey is needed. He stated that the consultants might include their own polls in

their RFP responses. Mr. Peck stated that the consultants know that the Town is conducting this as a parallel exercise; they are all very interested in the results.

Chairman Frank stated that he was surprised to hear that the Town will not have any input regarding the questions. He has never heard of a research project in which the purchaser of the research data did not participate in the construction of the questionnaire. Chairman Frank stated that he has heard from members of the public that they have concerns regarding the questions. He questioned how the Town can be confident that the questions will be worded in a way that the data will be useful and representative of the views of this community without Pulsar already understanding the community. Commissioner Needham stated that although he understands why the task of writing the questions would be up to the firm, he feels that some review of the questions prior to them going out should take place. Ms. Glassman stated that these are some of the issues that they will be discussing with Pulsar.

#### VIII. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

#### IX. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Needham motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 am. Commissioner Deming seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.