

From: Carrie Vibert October 10, 2012 10:32:40 AM
Subject: Economic Development Commission Minutes 09/05/2012 SPECIAL MEETING ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 5, 2012

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mark Deming, Chairman, called a special meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order on Thursday, September 5, 2012 at 7:32 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Town Offices. The following members and were also present: Allan R. Raphael, David Balboni, Derek Peterson, Shannon Knall, Charles Minor and Kris Barnett. Also in attendance was Hiram Peck, Town Planner, and other interested parties.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR JULY 12, 2012

Commissioner Deming said they will address the approval of the July minutes at their next regular meeting, scheduled for next week.

III. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON BIG Y APPLICATION AT 1313 HOPMEADOW STREET (Map I05, Block 403, Lot 16), 1349 HOPMEADOW STREET (Map I05, Block 403, Lot 16A), and HOPMEADOW STREET (Map I05, Block 403, Lot 15-B). Zone B2.

Commissioner Deming turned the floor over to the representatives of Big Y for their presentation. At this point in the meeting, Commissioner Peterson recused himself from this topic due to a conflict of interest resulting from his position on the Zoning Commission. Commissioner Peterson left the meeting.

Matt Whittmer, a Licensed Architect with Phase Zero Design, began the presentation by saying the area that is home to the proposed Big Y development has been neglected for years and said this project represents a unique opportunity to ignite future development in that area. Mr. Whittmer explained Big Y's plan for the site and said it will create a shopping destination, which will help the numerous other businesses in the north section of town as well as create value for other land owners in that area. Mr. Whittmer presented some boards with renderings of the street view of the proposed development. He then spoke of the proposed landscaping and site layout, noting they are aiming to create a walkable environment. Mr.

Whittmer then presented the Commissioners a rendering of the facade of the Big Y prototype they are proposing and then provided some specifications for the building. He then spoke about the smaller size of this proposed building (52,000 SF), in comparison to larger-scale big-box stores. At this point, Matt D'Amour, Store Development for Big Y Foods, said they are shifting towards the smaller-size prototype due to outside market factors. In response to a question from Commissioner Raphael, Mr. D'Amour said their Avon store is approximately 64,000 SF.

Mr. Whittmer then continued speaking about some more detailed specifications of the proposed building. He then went into some detail regarding the alterations to their original plans they have made as a result of their meetings with the Design Review Board, including some changes to the depth of the front-end "tower" on the facade, as well as color and height changes along the front facade to soften the look. He then spoke about the scale of the building in relation to those in the surrounding neighborhood, saying the length of the facade should fit it well with the neighborhood. Commissioner Balboni asked if they will go back to DRB prior to moving on in the process with the Zoning Commission. Mr. Whittmer said they have already met with DRB three (3) times and, while they have made some changes pursuant to their suggestions, DRB has asked for some changes that cannot be made. Mr. Whittmer spoke of the relationship between the proposed Big Y building and that of the International Skating Center, saying you will not see the Big Y development from the Skating Center, while showing the orientation on a site plan. He then reviewed connectivity/traffic flow on the site and egress/ingress. Traffic within the site was then discussed as a result of a question from Commissioner Knall. Mr. D'Amour said the truck service will be mostly at night. Commissioner Deming asked about the detention pond to the north of the property and that was discussed briefly by Mr. Whittmer. Commissioner Raphael asked about visibility from Route 10 and said it seems that as time goes on, not much of the building will be seen from the street. Commissioner Barnett asked about the proposed traffic light in front of Big Y and asked if they have taken into consideration the potential need for additional traffic lights in the future due to additional development. Mr. Peck said their traffic studies have taken all planned developments into consideration. It was noted that if Meadowood is developed, there could be three (3) lights along Route 10 within that area. Commissioner Minor asked about potential additional tax revenue to the Town. Mr. Wagner, site owner, said they currently pay taxes in the amount of approximately \$40,000 for the site and if completed, the estimated tax revenue would be between \$150,000 - \$200,000. Ms. Heavner, Board of Selectmen, said Director of Finance said it would come out to be about \$24/per tax payer. When asked about timing, Mr. D'Amour said the earliest they could open would be next fall. Commissioner Balboni asked about anticipated employment for the project and Mr. D'Amour said initially it would be approximately 175 full &

part-time employment and then they will evaluate continuously once the store is open. When Commissioner Deming asked about other Big Y stores and if they were stand-alone stores or anchors for a center. Mr. D'Amour said they have a variety of formats, but mostly they are the anchor for a center and he spoke of their high co-tenancy rate (99%), saying surrounding business tend to thrive. Mr. D'Amour continued by saying niche operators in the immediate area tend to continue and hold their own, so they do not anticipate other proprietors will go out of business. Mr. Mason, Board of Finance, asked the Commission how they see their role in this process. Mr. Mason noted he wants to see the Grand List grow. Commissioner Deming said the EDC's role is to see how they can encourage and grow the commercial tax base. He continued by saying he thinks this grocery anchor could spur further development in the north-end. Commissioner Deming said this project could be a major catalyst and could ultimately grow the grand list. Mr. Mason said he thinks the EDC should try and get a sense of what the north-end could ultimately become with some good-sized potential projects. Commissioner Deming said they have some funds which will be allocated towards a marketing study which will address that exact issue. Commissioner Knall asked what else could be on the property. Mr. Wagner said he is trying to focus on creating a walkable, sustainable development with some residential and retail, creating a live/work situation. He is not aiming to create a commercial strip center, he said. Mr. Peck spoke about the Strategic Implementation Plan (marketing study), previously referenced by Commissioner Deming, that will address the needs for the north and the south ends of Town. This study and the topic of funds for studies like this one, was discussed further. Commissioner Balboni brought up the fact that they are trying to bring in another insurance company to replace the loss of The Hartford.

Commissioner Raphael moved the Economic Development Commission send a letter to the Board of Selectmen in favor of this project. Commissioner Balboni seconded the motion. The motion passed with five (5) votes in favor. Commissioner Knall abstained from voting.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Balboni made a motion to adjourn the special meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:22 a.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Raphael and was unanimously passed.