

From: Lois Laczko November 17, 2008 1:18:45 PM
Subject: Economic Development Commission Minutes 09/11/2008 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
September 11, 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, Derek Peterson, Alan Needham, Chuck Minor, Lou George, Nancy Haase and Alan Levesque were present.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - August 14, 2008

The minutes of the August 14, 2008 meeting were tabled until the next meeting.

III. WEB SITE IMPROVEMENTS (Kevin Crimmins/Tom Frank)

Chairman Frank stated that they have compiled ideas from members of the EDC regarding website improvements. He and Commissioner Crimmins have volunteered to get together with Rick Bazzano to encourage him to make some of those improvements. At this meeting, they will also determine the priority of the feasible website changes. He stated that all EDC members are welcome to attend this meeting.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY AT SIMSBURY MEADOWS (Mark Deming)

Commissioner Deming stated that this study has been completed. Essentially they are making minor adjustments regarding the floodplain information, which has been updated. He stated that the study brought together approximately 20 years of information from various other studies.

After bringing all of this information together, Commissioner Deming stated that Simsbury Meadows is a very sensitive area that will not lend itself to

even modest development. He stated that this property should only be used for low impact, essentially, what is already there. He stated that this property would lend itself to trails or recreation uses.

Commissioner Deming stated that he would like to have Mr. Sawitzke come to the next meeting to give the Commission a more in-depth summary.

V. CHARRETTE INITIATIVE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SURVEY (Hiram Peck)

Chairman Frank distributed a status report to the Commission members regarding the Charrette.

Chairman Frank stated that the Town has received 6 responses to the RFP, which range in cost from \$250,000 to \$440,000. He stated that all of the responses have come in under \$500,000. A Charrette Sub-committee has been established, with the Chairmen of the various Land Use Boards and the Chairman of the EDC sitting on that committee.

Chairman Frank stated that the Charrette Sub-Committee of the Board of Selectmen met on September 4th, which was open to the public. At this meeting, the Sub-Committee discussed the Charrette and voted on the following issues:

" To recommend to the Board of Selectmen that they should authorize to the Pulsar Research Organization to conduct a public opinion study on economic development strategy alternatives. They encouraged a timetable so that the results would be available before the Charrette process would begin. Chairman Frank stated that the poll will ask the public what kind of economic development they want prior to preparing economic development plans or prior to the Charrette process. He stated that as part of this Sub-Committee, he registered a very strong negative view regarding the way this research was being organized. Ms. Glassman has asked the EDC to help organize this study.

" To support the Charrette process and urged the Board of Selectmen to proceed with the Charrette subject to the Board of Finance approval of the funding methodology, possibly consisting of grants, movement of funds from one account to another, and/or use of reserves.

" To recommend to the Board of Selectmen to ask three of the six responders to the RFP to make final presentations.

Chairman Frank stated that at their meeting on September 8th, the Board of Selectmen authorized the expenditure of \$15,000 to conduct the public opinion research on alternative development strategies. He distributed a copy of notes that he took from that BOS meeting to the EDC members, which listed the objections and purpose of this research and the methodology. He

stated that he feels that the methodology is faulty and requires further review. Being concerned about this research, Chairman Frank stated that he sent an e-mail to the Board of Selectmen, Chairs of various Boards and Commissions, and the EDC members raising questions about doing this research correctly without rushing things.

Also at the September 8th Board of Selectmen's meeting, Chairman Frank stated that they also authorized the Town Planner to set up the presentations of the three consultants for the Sub-Committee. These presentations will be open to the public. At that September 8th meeting, the BOS also discussed and agreed to suspend further discussion about the Charrette as to whether they were in favor of a Charrette or not, although they did refer the matter to the Board of Finance. The BOF will meet to decide if it is possible to fund the Charrette in the amounts that are outlined.

Regarding the Economic Development Survey, Chairman Frank stated that there are three major questions. Will it be anecdotal or statistically significant? Will any Board or Commission have any input regarding the questions? To what extent will background information be provided or should it be provided to the respondents?

Commissioner Deming stated that he feels that Charrette and survey are redundant.

Selectman Long stated that he is a supporter of the Economic Development Survey. He stated that the Charrette does not necessarily reflect the overall opinion of the citizens; the process could be dominated by certain groups. The Economic Development Survey will be a genuine professional survey of the attitudes within the community. He stated that it is also helpful to know what types of economic impacts different types of development might have on a community. Selectman Long stated that a Charrette is a much deeper process of how to accomplish what it is that the citizens want, although he feels that both the Charrette and survey are necessary in order to have a full understanding of where the community needs to go. Regarding the survey, Selectman Long believes that this should be left totally to the professionals. He feels that this will enable the survey to be as pure as possible.

Commissioner Haase stated that in order to have a pure survey, she also feels that the questions should be left up to the professionals. The Boards and Commissions should not help craft the questions. Chairman Frank stated that the professionals should put the questions together, although the initiator of the research should make sure they are crystal clear as to what the Town would like to find out and what the purpose of the research is.

Commissioner George stated that he believes the Charrette and the Economic Development Survey are two separate items; they should not be combined. He feels that they need to be kept separate and in different discussions. He agrees that the questions should be left up to the professionals to craft. He stated that he is in favor of the survey; he is not in favor of a Charrette.

Commissioner George stated his concerns regarding the Board of Selectmen taking a position regarding the survey, but not taking a position regarding the Charrette. He feels that it was inappropriate of the Board of Selectmen to give the responsibility of making the decision regarding the Charrette to the Board of Finance. He feels that the Board of Selectmen should state what they feel based on what they get from the citizens. If the Board of Finance votes against the fund transfers, he stated that the Charrette issue is at a standstill. Selectmen Long stated that this is not correct. He stated that this is only one method of financing. There are several different ways to go forward.

Regarding why the Board of Selectmen have not taken a position regarding the Charrette, Selectman Long stated that they would like to hear the consultant's presentations first regarding how they will proceed and the costs related to the Charrette. He stated that the Board of Selectmen knows that in the current budget, certain money has been appropriated for certain things. There is available money in the current budget that could be applied to the Charrette process to offset some of the costs. The Board of Selectmen is asking the Board of Finance if the Charrette process could be funded from dollars that already exist within the budget.

Commissioner Haase stated her concerns regarding moving funds around. She feels that the citizens need to be aware of this prior to moving any funds. She believes that money cannot officially be moved until January. Chairman Frank questioned if the EDC members should go to the Board of Finance meeting in order to speak and ask questions. He stated his concerns regarding that the Board of Finance might become the decision maker as to whether or not the Charrette happens.

Commissioner Needham stated that he agrees with Commissioner George that the Board of Selectmen should take a position regarding the Charrette in order to move development along in Simsbury.

Chairman Frank stated that he also feels that the Board of Selectmen should take a position regarding the Charrette. He feels that the Board of Finance should be given a clear view from the Board of Selectmen of their level of commitment regarding the Charrette. He feels that this could affect the Board of Finance's decision.

Commissioner Minor questioned what the EDC's options where. Chairman Frank stated that the EDC could pass a resolution to urge the Board of Selectmen to communicate clearly and unequivocally it's position regarding the Charrette to the Board of Finance prior to their deliberations. The Commission members agreed.

Mr. Peck stated that things sometimes do move slowly; the Charrette is an important and costly process. He stated that the Board of Selectmen would like to get the consultants interviewed by the end of September, which will allow the process to move forward. Also, on October 1st or 2nd, there will be a public meeting to explain the cost, depending on which consultant is selected. This information will be needed in order for the Board of Finance to go forward. He stated that the Board of Selectmen are proceeding cautiously, as is the Board of Finance.

Commissioner George made a motion that the Chairman of the Economic Development Commission send a letter to the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance stating that the EDC has discussed the issues and is unclear as to the position of the Board of Selectmen and feel that it is appropriate that the Board of Selectmen determine, by resolution, if they are in favor or not in favor of a Charrette based on the parameters the Town has to date, so that other Boards and Commissions can vote with that knowledge as to how the leadership feels.

Commissioner Needham amended the motion to state that it is the sense of the Economic Development Commission that the Board of Selectmen should vote to make known if they agree with the principle of a Charrette. Commissioner Haase seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

VI. SIMSBURY MAIN STREET PARTNERSHIP

Sarah Floroski stated that they are currently working on replacing the Gateway signs in Simsbury. She stated that Main Street Partnership and their Design Committee have looked at a variety of different designs. The Board of Selectmen has voted to approve new monument signs. She showed the plans for the signs to the Commission. The new signs will Brownstone monument signs for the Gateways, which will stand over 9' tall. She stated that the second phase of this will be to do the village markers. She stated that all of these gateway and village signs will be unified. Ms. Floroski stated that they are currently getting the costs for these signs. Commissioner Deming questioned the estimate cost of the gateway and village signs would be. Ms. Floroski stated that the cost is estimated to be \$12,000-\$15,000 for the gateway signs. She is not sure the cost for the village markers as of yet. They have received \$10,000 from Linda Scofield and they will also be looking to see what grants are available. The rest

of the money will come from private funding.

Ms. Floroski showed the Commission the Downtown map, the adventure brochure and the heritage brochure for their review.

Regarding the Simsbury branding project, Ms. Floroski showed the members the economic development folder. This folder has a great deal of information on it that relates to Simsbury that will not soon go out of date. For updated information, the folder has pockets for inserts. She stated that the goal is to be flexible of the needs given to the Town. The information in these pockets can be updated quickly and inexpensively; the folder is versatile, flexible and current. Ms. Floroski stated that Main Street Partnership needs help gathering the information that would be put into the economic development folder, especially geared toward what the EDC would like to put in, i.e. business sites.

Ms. Floroski stated that they will be initially printing 10,000 Downtown Simsbury brochures; 5,000 Heritage and Adventure brochures; and 1,000 of the Economic Development folders with grant monies that they have already received.

Ms. Floroski stated that Mary Glassman has asked that Main Street Partnership hold a "Top 10 Taxpayers Breakfast". This breakfast will be held in October. The purpose of this breakfast is to thank the top taxpayers for being in Simsbury and to also let them know what is happening in Simsbury. They believe that this will help form a better relationship with these businesses in the top tier. The Board of Selectmen will be attending this breakfast. Ms. Floroski stated that they will be asking that representatives from various Boards and Commissions also attend. She feels that this is an important step in cultivating these relationships.

Commissioner George questioned how the determination was made of who is invited to this breakfast. He feels that the breakfast is a great idea, although he feels that the middle and lower tiers of taxpayers are just as important. Ms. Floroski stated that they have gathered information from the Tax Assessor in order to identify the top taxpayers. She stated that the middle and lower taxpayers, the small business owners, are extremely important, although they work with them on a daily basis.

Commissioner Haase stated that the Main Street Partnership has done a tremendous job leveraging in-kind services. Their budgets now reflect this. She stated that the money the Town invests is a great return on their investment.

Ms. Floroski stated that Main Street Partnership is in the midst of finishing a preservation study on Eno Memorial Hall. They did receive a

grant for \$8,750, which was match by \$8,750 from the Town of Simsbury. She stated that this project took a historic architect team, surveyors, etc., to look over Enos to get a handle on the priorities. She stated that there are a lot of safety and security issues with this building. She stated that Main Street Partnership has hired Cross Key Architects and now have a final draft of the study, which they will be presenting to the Board of Selectmen on September 22nd.

VII. BRIEF REPORTS FROM BOARD/COMMISSION LIAISONS

Chamber - Commissioner George stated that they had a home improvement show. The Chamber stated that they will be holding another event similar to this one again because it went very well. The exhibitors did very well and got many clients through this show. Commissioner George stated that the home improvement show, from an efficiency and productivity standpoint, was very well done.

Commissioner George stated that the Chamber will be having an informal political breakfast for the Senate candidates. They will also be inviting the State Representative candidates, although the breakfast is really to hear from the Senate candidates. The breakfast will be held on October 21st.

Commissioner George stated that the Chamber will also be holding their after-hours networking events that they have done in the past.

Regarding the Charrette, the Chamber wanted to clarify that the Chamber Government Affairs Committee has taken a position and sent a letter to the Board of Selectmen in February. As of this time, they still stand by that letter.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Frank stated that the Simsbury Water Pollution Control Authority will be holding a public hearing tonight regarding the extension of the sewer line down Wolcott Road, which is something that the EDC had supported in favor of Phonon. He stated that he would be attending that meeting. The EDC members gave Chairman Frank their permission to speak on behalf of the EDC in favor of this application.

Commissioner Peterson stated that the Getty station would be closing down. He stated that he would like to know more about this and how the EDC might be able to help. He stated that he would find out more information regarding this and would report back to the EDC at their next meeting.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Haase motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 am.
Commissioner George seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.