

From: Lois Laczko November 18, 2009 11:52:30 AM
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To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
October 8, 2009
REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Haase called the regular 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, Alan Levesque, Alan Needham, Lou George and Chuck Minor were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of September 10, 2009

Commissioner George made a motion to approve the September 10, 2009 minutes as written. Commissioner Levesque seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

3. Reports: SMSP, FVVA, BOS

Commissioner Haase stated that the Taste of Simsbury was well attended. The restaurants were pleased and some have already signed up for next year. She stated that membership mailings for Main Street Partnership went out. This mailing also included Shop Simsbury Cards. This is an effort for businesses to communicate with the public. The card is for special business offers to members. There is also a website of businesses.

Regarding renovations to Eno Memorial Hall, Mr. Sawitzke stated that Main Street has been a good partner. They have raised money for benches and the entry. They are currently raising additional money for other renovations.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that they will be painting Eno. They have finished several rooms inside and will be going through the whole building. The fire suppression system is done. They can now fill the building to full occupancy. They can use the auditorium and balcony to full capacity.

Nancy Anstey, FVVA, stated that their membership is doing well. She stated that they will be putting their guide out in October. There is a Fall Get-A-Way program that has started with area hotels. She stated that there is also a Warm Up to Winter brochure; this program runs from December through March. She stated that this will be a great way to showcase the Valley. Ms. Anstey stated that there is also a Haunted Miniature Golf Event in Farmington. This event will run mid October to November 1st. This event will be bigger than last year.

Ms. Anstey stated that they are working with the Farmington Valley Film Commission. They have great people working on this; they also have a website up and running. There have been three requests for information for potential films, although they have not been chosen. She is hopeful that 2010 will pick up. She stated that they have also been working with ESPN.

Ms. Anstey stated that there is no State of Connecticut Tourism Office. The State does not have any money. She stated that FVVA has been the only tourism office in the State for several months. They have been giving out State and Regional information.

Ms. Anstey distributed the Winter Brochure and the Haunted Miniature Golf flyer to the Commission members.

4. Discussion of the draft Local Vendor Ordinance

Mr. Sawitzke stated that the purpose of this Ordinance is to try to spend product and services money in the community. They have looked at dollar limits. He stated that a local vendor has to be a company in Simsbury that pays taxes in Simsbury. He stated that they also must meet the low bid. This Ordinance states that if the local contractor is 5% or less a percent above the low bid and they meet all of the other requirements, they can receive the contract. Mr. Sawitzke stated that they also looked at an upper dollar limit and they looked at different types of projects. He stated that the upper dollar amount is \$250,000.

Commissioner George questioned what would happen if two local vendors met all of the criteria. Mr. Sawitzke stated that the contractor with the lower number would get the contract.

Charity Folk, Chamber of Commerce, stated that the Board of Selectmen has set a public hearing for October 26th. She stated that this Ordinance would not apply to the Board of Education. It also does not include professional services and it excludes sub-contractors.

Ms. Folk stated that a notice has been sent to their members to get feedback from local contractors. She stated that seven Towns in

Connecticut have this type of Ordinance. She stated that the Chamber is in favor of this Ordinance and she urged the Economic Development Commission to look at this Ordinance favorably.

Commissioner Levesque questioned why the Board of Education was excluded. Mr. Sawitzke stated that he was unsure. He stated that perhaps it is because schools take grants, which are not allowed under this Ordinance. Ms. Folk stated that schools were also under a different bid process.

Commissioner Crimmins questioned what problem will be solved through this Ordinance. He stated that although he is in favor of local businesses, his concern is that this is a preference program. Mr. Sawitzke stated that, in today's economy, the Economic Development Commission, the Chamber of Commerce and others, to provide for local businesses is huge.

Commissioner Peterson questioned if the Town would be obligated to take the local vendor bid if it is within the 5%. Mr. Sawitzke stated that they have to meet all of the requirements. It is a bid process. He stated that they use the State evaluation regarding safety. The advantage of using local contractors is that communication and the ability to meet with them is easier. It is sometimes difficult to do this with out of State vendors.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that he likes sunset provisions on Ordinances. This way the Town can see if this would work well for them.

There was some discussion regarding whether or not this Ordinance would be good for Simsbury and what the objectives of this Ordinance might be. Commissioner George stated that this Ordinance could help Simsbury businesses grow. He stated that the Town needs to do the little things to help the economy grow in Simsbury; this is one of them. Commissioner Crimmins stated that an initiative like this could make sense to carry out a particular strategy, although he is unsure what that strategy is.

Commissioner Haase questioned how long the other Towns have had this type of Ordinance in place and what they feel are the benefits to their local businesses. Mr. Sawitzke stated that in the summary sheet, which was distributed to the Commission members, it listed several communities and some of their criteria. He stated that Wethersfield has had an Ordinance of this type for 15 years; Middletown was the first Town with this type of Ordinance.

Commissioner George stated that he likes the idea of a sunset provision. He suggested that the Economic Development Commission recommend this to the Board of Selectmen.

Commissioner Levesque questioned if the Chamber of Commerce had considered

how much work businesses get in other Towns and the impacts on businesses that get this work in surrounding Towns. Ms. Folk stated that this information was not researched.

Commissioner Needham questioned if the definition of local business was good enough. Commissioner George stated that if a business pays real estate or personal property taxes, they would be considered a local business. Mr. Sawitzke stated that the business should be considered Town-based, that has a principle place of business in Simsbury and proof of ownership or long-term lease.

Commissioner George made a motion to have the Chairman of the Economic Development Commission send a letter and/or speak at the public hearing in favor of this Ordinance with the suggestion that a sunset provision be placed upon it and that data be kept to look at it at the end of the sunset provision. Commissioner Levesque seconded the motion.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that he is not in favor of this motion as worded. He feels that more discussion is needed regarding the timing of the sunset provision. Mr. Sawitzke suggested that a 3-5 year timeframe would be appropriate. He stated that sufficient data could be collected in this time period.

Commissioner George made an amendment to his motion to add that the sunset provision will be for a four-year time period. Commissioner Levesque seconded the amendment. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Discussion of the Charrette closing presentation; next steps

Mr. Peck stated that, overall, the reception to the Charrette was good, although there is a great deal of work still to be done. The final presentation by the consultant is on the Town website. There are also several DVD's available in the Planning Department if a Commission member would like to borrow one.

Regarding the regulation, Mr. Peck stated that the consultant is currently putting this together. They will be back in November with a draft regulation. He stated that he is hopeful that the Town can find enough money to have the consultant come back one more time after that to meet with the Land Use Commissions to discuss what is being proposed. Mr. Peck stated that the consultant will be back in December or January with the final regulation. The Zoning Commission can then hold a public hearing to put the regulation in place.

Mr. Peck stated that this will be a 40-year build out plan. No one is forcing land owners to do anything they do not want to do. He stated

that the Charrette was a good start to the overall process. He stated that the code will be a different process than what is currently in place. He stated that he is working on having people that finance projects come in to talk with this Commission. If Simsbury is to move forward, they need to be aware of the economic situation. He stated that it was very important that there was an economic aspect to the Charrette.

6. Status of the PAD in Zoning: Hiram Peck and Alan Needham

Mr. Peck stated that there are no changes with the PAD Regulation. The Zoning Commission has scheduled three workshops in order to review and discuss this draft. The PAD is a regulation that would apply to other areas in Town as well, not just the Center. He stated that the PAD Regulation needs to proceed. He is hopeful to get the regulation to a public hearing by the end of the year. He encouraged the Economic Development Commission members to get a copy of the regulation.

Commissioner Minor questioned that, if the Charrette Regulation gets adopted, would the PAD apply to the Town Center. Mr. Peck stated that it could be an overlay; it depends on what the Town Center Regulation looks like. This is just one tool that a developer can choose to use.

7. Status of the Tax Abatement Program: Hiram Peck

Mr. Peck stated that the Board of Selectmen discussed revising the Tax Abatement Program in order to make it more efficient and effective. They will be having a meeting today regarding several applications that have been submitted under the existing program. He stated that the Board of Selectmen is looking for predictability, what the costs are for the Town and what value there is for the Town. He stated that there needs to be a balance.

8. New/Old Business

Commissioner George questioned what was happening with the Gateway signage project. Mr. Sawitzke stated that the Town would be going out to bid soon. There was a delay because the signs could not be put in the State right-of-way. He stated that it took time to contact the adjacent property owners regarding easements. He stated that the signs have already been approved.

Commissioner George questioned what was happening with the Performing Arts Commission and the band shell. He feels that the Economic Development Commission should be aware of what is happening, how the season went, and what that Commission is doing. Commissioner Crimmins suggested inviting the Performing Arts Commission to give a report at their next

meeting.

Commissioner Haase stated that that they will be interviewing for the position of Promotional Operation Manager on behalf of the Town. The person hired for this position will be working with Gerry Toner, but as an agent for the Town. She suggested sending a liaison from this Commission to the next Performing Arts Center Committee meeting.

9. Adjournment

Commissioner Levesque made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner George seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.