

From: Lois Laczko January 20, 2010 12:02:33 PM  
Subject: Economic Development Commission Minutes 12/10/2009 ADOPTED  
To: SimsburyCT\_EconMin  
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES  
December 10, 2009  
REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Deming called the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 7:35 AM in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Commission members Kevin Crimmins, Lou George, Chuck Minor, Alan Levesque, Alan Needham, and Nancy Haase were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of November 12, 2009

Commissioner Haase made a motion to approve the November 12, 2009 minutes as written. Commissioner Needham seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

3. Proposed Joint Meeting with SMSP on January 14, 2010

Chairman Deming stated that there will be a joint meeting with Main Street Partnership on January 14th. This will be the Economic Development Commission's regular meeting.

4. Reports:

Farmington Valley Visitors Association

Nancy Anstey, Farmington Valley Visitors Association, stated that they had a meeting at the Iron Frog with the Film Commission. They continue to move forward; they are one month away from going on-line. She stated that they are also moving forward with the production guide. Press releases will also be going out.

Ms. Anstey stated that people have been very receptive to the Warm up to Winter program. They have already printed 3,000 copies; 1,000 additional

copies are needed for distribution.

Ms. Anstey stated that the Farmington Valley Visitors Association will be starting their new membership campaign in January. She stated that memberships have slowed down; she is hopeful that they can get new members this upcoming year. She asked that the Economic Development Commission continue to support the FVVA.

Chairman Deming questioned if the FVVA has worked on their budget yet. Ms. Anstey stated that their budget was already approved in October for the 2010 budget. Chairman Deming asked that this information be e-mailed to him so he could forward it to the Commission members.

Commissioner George questioned how the film project in South Windsor developed. Ms. Anstey stated that this project has been in the works for 2-3 years, although he is unsure how it got started. She stated that she would look into this.

Ms. Anstey questioned if she should attend the January joint meeting. Chairman Deming stated that she should.

SMPAC, Dave Ryan

Mr. Ryan stated that there was a task force formed two years ago to oversee the Performing Arts Center facility. At this time, the task force recommended that the Town hire a manager, which they have done. He stated that their goals were to set policies for the Performing Arts Center, to set objectives and to hire a manager. One policy that was set, which is on their website, is that this facility exists to improve the quality of life in Simsbury. Mr. Ryan stated that the Performing Arts Center has hired David Bell as their new manager. Mr. Bell has a great deal of experience and a broad background.

Mr. Ryan distributed the financial report to the Commission members. He stated that this facility is licensed to a promoter; the promoter is the one who takes the risk. The Performing Arts Center has been charging \$10,000 per date to use the facility and also \$2 per ticket sold.

Regarding the statement of revenues and expenditures for the Performing Arts Center, Mr. Ryan stated that this includes the banshell fees, contributions, facility maintenance, and concessions. The total gross revenue is \$163,851. The total expenditures, which include salaries/benefits and support services, are \$165,502. The Performing Arts Center is left with a deficit of \$1,651. Mr. Ryan stated that there is a revenue fund that was left over from fundraising and prior year's operations, which is relied on when there is a deficit.

Mr. Ryan stated that depreciation is calculated based on the assets, which totals \$3.4 million. He stated that total assets and total liabilities are equal at \$1.34 million. The report also included a list of complementary tickets that were given out. The Board of Selectmen passed a policy that does not allow Town employees or officials to receive complementary tickets.

Commissioner Crimmins questioned if the objective of the Performing Art Center was to make a profit. Mr. Ryan stated that this is a cash positive operation. They need to run this facility like a business at no cost to the Town.

Commissioner Crimmins questioned how the Economic Development Commission could help and how open dates could be filled throughout the year. Mr. Ryan stated that the biggest obstacle they have is the weather. To offset this, they need to get more events scheduled. He stated that this Commission could help in terms of promotion. He stated that most of their helpers are volunteers. The Performing Arts Center also needs to raise more money. Mr. Ryan stated that in order to manage the facility, there should be a governing board of Simsbury citizens. He stated that they are recommending that this temporary Board be made a permanent board under the Charter and that the Board should be given authority to hire the managers and not have to go through the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Ryan stated that extra money is needed to expand the facility; there was a master plan in place when the facility was built, although the phases never moved forward. They would like the Town to set up a 501C-3 for the Performing Arts Center of Simsbury Meadows Foundation. A manager would need to be hired for this foundation.

Commissioner George questioned if Mr. Ryan thought the Performing Arts Center was at a disadvantage with the facility as is. Mr. Ryan stated that the facility does not have a roof for a covered area. This is a big factor with bringing in promoters. Also, having a permanent box office and permanent concession facilities are needed. Mr. Ryan stated that the Performing Arts Center will soon have a competitor; Windsor is putting up a covered facility.

Mr. Ryan stated that the Public Gathering Permit is also being revised. The Performing Arts Center Board has not adopted any policy, although the Zoning Commission would regulate this if the Board of Selectmen applies to them. He stated that because the REACH Foundation did not follow the rules regarding alcoholic beverages, they are revising this permit. He stated that the Performing Arts Center Board does not agree with these changes to the Public Gathering Permit.

Chairman Deming questioned if there have been any incidents involving alcohol that would cause the Town any concern. Mr. Ryan stated that there has not been any police action that he is aware of. He feels that changing the rules for everyone because of the REACH Foundation is a mistake.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that the biggest impediment for this facility is the weather. He questioned how other facilities deal with this issue. Mr. Ryan stated that there is no great answer to this question. There is insurance, although it is very expensive. He stated that a covered area may sell the facility more and having more events would also help.

Commissioner George questioned why the facility has trouble booking events. Mr. Ryan stated that he is unsure, other than the reasons he already has given. Mary Glassman stated that she feels this is because of two reasons. The first reason is structural; the costs are too high. The second reason is that the facility does not generate enough revenue. She stated that the real money is in the selling of food and beverages.

#### 5. Build Out Analysis: Report on Meeting with Town Assessor

Chairman Deming stated that several Commission members met with the Town Assessor. They will be putting together a report/analysis regarding how the Town can increase its commercial and industrial tax base.

#### 6. Process of Creating a "Business Improvement Zone"

Chairman Deming questioned what the process would be for creating a business improvement zone in Simsbury. Mr. Peck stated that they would need to look at what is allowed under the existing district statutes and then find the area they would want to do this in. He stated that the tax abatement program is related to this. This could dovetail into a business improvement district.

Chairman Deming questioned if this would require the Planning and Zoning Commissions approval. Mr. Peck stated that this type of district would not be a zone on the Zoning map, although it would be good to coordinate between all of the agencies. The business improvement district would be a separate entity.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that the context of the business improvement zone might be Herman Drive and other areas like this. One of the possible approaches to making this a more vibrant area may be the business improvement zone. He questioned what things the Town should be considering to make this area more vibrant. He stated that there is a cul-de-sac that can only be accessed by leaving the Town. He suggested looking

into connecting this street to Wolcott Road. Mr. Peck stated that there could be incentives for businesses to go to this area.

Chairman Deming stated that he would put this on the agenda for the next meeting to continue this discussion.

#### 7. Old Business/New Business

Chairman Deming stated that the Zoning Commission will be meeting on December 14th and will be electing a new chairman. He stated that the PAD Regulation is currently in draft form. He questioned if the Economic Development Commission would like to write a letter to the Zoning Commission, after the new chairman is in place, to ask them to address the PAD, to schedule a public hearing and to vote in a timely fashion.

Commissioner Crimmins felt that the letter should take a position on the PAD Regulation and not just ask questions. He felt that more discussion was needed prior to writing the letter.

Chairman Deming stated that this item will be put on the next agenda for further discussion.

Commissioner George stated that the Chamber of Commerce has already written a letter encouraging the Zoning Commission to move the PAD Regulation forward.

In response to a question regarding the Charrette, Mr. Peck stated that the consultant will be back in Simsbury with the draft regulation. Main Street Partnership has applied for and received additional funding in order to get the consultant back several more times. Mr. Peck stated that he is hopeful that the consultant can come back to Town two more times, once with the draft and again with the final proposal.

Commissioner George stated that he attended a gathering that the Metro Hartford Alliance recently held. They were updated on how MHA was working with Towns and what they are now offering.

Chairman Deming stated that he would put this on the next agenda for further discussion.

#### 8. Adjournment

Commissioner George made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 a.m. Commissioner Needham seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

