

From: Lois Laczko January 12, 2009 9:36:26 AM
Subject: Economic Development Commission Minutes 12/11/2008 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
December 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, Lou George, Nancy Haase, Alan Levesque, Alan Needham, Derek Peterson, Chuck Minor and Kevin Crimmins were present. Rick Bazzano was also present.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of November 13, 2008

Commissioner Minor made a motion to approve the November 13, 2008 minutes as written. Commissioner Crimmins seconded the motion, which passed. Chairman Frank abstained.

III. PRELIMINARY BUDGET DISCUSSION - 2009/2010

Sarah Floroski, Main Street Partnership distributed refined work plans that were agreed upon with the First Selectman. She stated that Main Street also presented an internal report before the Board of Selectmen. Last year, she stated that Main Street and the First Selectman agreed upon a scope of services, although much more was taken on by Main Street than what was agreed upon. They have done what they were responsible to do and have also added the following projects: the Gateway Signage Committee; some responsibility regarding the Charrette; and design responsibility at Eno Memorial Hall. Ms. Floroski stated that the Town and their members get an amazing return on their investment.

Ms. Floroski stated that Main Street received \$60,000 in grant money, which would not have come to the Town if it were not for Main Street. They are currently working on another \$40,000 worth of grants. She stated that the \$40,000 investment that the Town makes has a more than double return.

Commissioner Peterson stated that Main Street requested a substantial increase last year. He questioned what their range might be this year. Ms. Floroski stated that they would be asking for a \$10,000 increase at the most. She stated that the Board has not yet voted and she will be stating her concerns at their next meeting and asking them to consider no increase for this coming year. She feels that staying at the current level would actually be a cut to Main Street because of these economic times.

Chairman Frank stated that the Farmington Valley Visitors Association (FVVA) has been approved in the budget for \$4,000 for this year. Ms. Floroski stated that she believes that the funding for the FVVA was cut by the First Selectman. Commissioner Haase stated that she thinks that the FVVA did receive their membership dues, although not the total amount of \$4,000. She stated that the information that Ms. Floroski distributed to the Commission members regarding their work plans is very helpful when discussing the budget and scope of services. She would like to see this same information from the FVVA in order to justify their funds.

Chairman Frank stated that they would try to get this information from the FVVA and will discuss it at their January meeting. Commissioner Peterson stated that he does not want to receive the information on the same day that they will be voting on the budget. He would like more time to review the information. Chairman Frank stated that the EDC might need to have a special meeting in January. He stated that he would talk to Mr. Kane regarding timing.

Regarding the Metro Hartford Alliance (MHA), Chairman Frank stated that there has been some confusion regarding membership dues. He stated that he will be following up with Kevin Kane and Mary Glassman regarding this issue. He stated that the MHA membership dues are based on per capita; Simsbury's dues are \$4,732. MHA will not be raising their dues next year. Chairman Frank stated that the question is if the EDC should continue paying for the services of MHA. The biggest question is what the highest and best use for their money is.

Commissioner Deming stated that the EDC needs to be engaged both on a local and regional level. They are engaged locally through Main Street Partnership. He feels that they need MHA to be engaged regionally. He feels that the EDC should have a minimal membership with MHA and only use their resources when needed.

Commissioner Peterson stated that he feels that because of the current economic situation, the EDC should cut this from their budget this year and revisit it again next year. Commissioner Minor stated that although the EDC may not benefit directly from the MHA, the Town does benefit.

Commissioner Crimmins feels that MHA, as a consultant, does not need to continue, although membership dues should be paid because of the regional benefits. Commissioner Crimmins suggested negotiating with MHA regarding the amount per capita; before cutting this from the budget, they should try reducing the costs.

Commissioner Haase suggested that they get Mary Glassman's perception of what the benefits are to the Town from MHA. She stated that she also agrees with Commissioner Crimmins regarding trying to modify their membership. She also stated that she believes the Chamber is a member of MHA; they may have different memberships or values that they associated to Chambers versus Municipalities. She feels that they should get more information regarding this; they may be able to supplement the membership that they have.

Chairman Frank questioned what the EDC and other parts of the Town get for their dollars from MHA that has been useful. He stated that MHA is a great organization, although they have been somewhat invisible.

Regarding an Economic Development Plan, Chairman Frank stated that the Planning Commission is continuing to discuss the implementation of various aspects of the POCD, which is a formalized Economic Development Plan. He stated that the EDC has a responsibility to develop a Plan. This issue was discussed at a prior EDC meeting where there was a consensus that an Economic Development Plan was not needed until the Charrette was completed. Chairman Frank stated that the timetable for the Charrette, if it were to move forward, would be completed, at the earliest, in late 2009. As a budgetary strategy issue, he stated that this Commission will need to discuss if they would like to put consultant funds in the upcoming budget to assist in the preparation of the Economic Development Plan.

Commissioner Deming stated that prior to the Economic Development Plan, he feels that the Commission needs to discuss specific topics, how to implement them, and where the money and time would come from in order to accomplish these tasks. He does not want to develop a great big plan that is not feasible to implement. Commissioner Peterson agreed with Commissioner Deming, although he does not believe that the Town will approve the funding.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that several months ago when the EDC discussed that an Economic Development Plan was not necessary, at that time and in that context, he feels that this was the right decision. Their perspective was that by this time, a Charrette would have occurred and they would be looking at the output from the Charrette, which would represent what the economic development plan for the Town should be. Since the Charrette did not happen, Commissioner Crimmins feels that the EDC should reconsider

their decision. They cannot, as a Commission, ignore that they have an obligation to draft an Economic Development Plan.

Commissioner Minor agreed with Commissioner Crimmins. He stated that not having a plan would be shortsighted.

Commissioner Haase stated that the Planning Commission created the POCD, which are suggestions of what the other Commissions are supposed to do. She stated that to ignore that charge would be wrong. She suggested that the EDC have their own workshop, by way of a special meeting, where they can discuss the specific topics that should be in the Economic Development Plan, with input from the First Selectman.

Chairman Frank left the Commission at 8:27 a.m. Commissioner Deming Chaired the meeting.

IV. VIRTUAL TOWN HALL PROTOTYPE WEBSITE PRESENTATION

Millard Rose, Virtual Town Hall (VTH), made a presentation to the Commission members regarding the EDC webpage within the Town's website. He showed them other Town's websites so they could see the different options they might have.

Mr. Rose stated that the EDC could use the stock website from VTH. The cost for this would be \$4,995 for the build-outs and a fee of \$1,500 per year for hosting and support. The only restriction would be for 60 minutes of video clips; this would be an additional cost. From this website, links could be chosen and drop-down menus could appear. Mr. Rose stated that they could also give the EDC some ideas of some other things that they might want on their website.

Commissioner Peterson questioned if the EDC's webpage should look totally different from the Town's website.

Mr. Rose's presentation also showed testimonials from other sites that the EDC could also put on their site. He stated that the EDC would be able to decide what levels of content they would want with live examples.

Mr. Rose stated that the EDC webpage could be managed by the Commission or VTH could do this through a service called Virtual Web Master Service. For a fee, they can edit additional text, although as for the set up, Simsbury would have to do this on their own. The presentation showed how different Towns treat their content differently.

After viewing Simsbury's website, Mr. Bazzano stated that the EDC could change the top banner for their portion, although the links to the left of

the page could not be changed.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that throughout this presentation, he has noticed that flash can be a big burden on the user. He feels that having video on their website would be an even bigger problem. He stated that the EDC would like to see what they can do to better organize and present their information and get guidance from VTH regarding the content they should have on their site. Mr. Millard stated that he has given the EDC many options through this presentation; they can now pick and chose what is appropriate for Simsbury. Fundamentally, it is up to each EDC in terms of how to present their content.

Commissioner Haase stated that she is not sure Simsbury's EDC is ready for this. She feels that it is too soon to use this as a marketing tool; the Zoning Regulations are not complete and there is no conceptual plan for the Town Center. They are not ready to create many of the drop-down menus at this point.

Mr. Bazzano stated that the EDC should move forward on this issue one way or another. He stated that they could propose some short term goals for the website. He would like to change the banner on the EDC portion of the website. He asked for the EDC's input as well as some economic development photos for Simsbury. Mr. Bazzano stated that he will re-work the content layout and will e-mail back and forth with the EDC members for their comment and input.

Ms. Floroski distributed the branding material from Main Street Partnership. The Commission discussed their options regarding their portion of the website. Commissioner Deming stated they could put ongoing projects that have been approved as information related. He stated that the EDC needs to discuss if they would like a new banner on their portion of the site and if they should use some of the branding material offered to them by Main Street Partnership. They should also discuss the visuals that they would like to have on the website also. Commissioner Deming stated that the people who go to the website should be able to find out as much information as possible that is relevant about Simsbury and the surrounding area.

Mr. Bazzano stated that many people call the Town Hall looking for additional information that is not currently on the website. The Commission asked him to e-mail them regarding the most reoccurring questions. They will then discuss this information to see if it should be added to the website.

Commissioner Deming stated that this needs to be done in a reasonable timeframe; the EDC needs to review information, make the changes and

implement those changes. This could take several months. Commissioner Crimmins stated that he would meet with Mr. Bazzano to discuss what the priorities are. Commissioner Deming stated that he would like to attend this meeting also, and invited any of the other Commission members that were interested.

V. REPORTS FROM TOWN PLANNING STAFF

Status of revised Zoning Regulations

Mr. Peck stated that there is a public hearing scheduled for the Zoning Commission on January 5, 2009 regarding the proposed Ordinance for Adult uses.

Review of new development projects...including the Hartford Property

Mr. Peck stated that there are 2 proposed regulations regarding allowing a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). There are 2 potential pending applications for a CCRC to come to Simsbury. He stated that the CCRC regulation consists of definitions and it also provides for the process for the application to move forward. Mr. Peck stated that he is also proposing a Conceptual Master Plan (CMP). If an applicant comes in with a master plan showing a general plan of what the development would look like the Commission could accept or reject it. If the Commission decides that the plan is acceptable, the applicant would come back with the final details. This would allow the applicant to get financing and also get an answer from the Commission prior to spending a great deal of money.

Mr. Peck stated that the Board of Selectmen has asked the Town Attorney to consider and draft a mixed/use regulation. Mr. Peck stated that he is unsure of what zones it will apply to. The draft should be received within the next 1-2 weeks.

Mr. Peck stated that there are two proposals for projects. Regarding tax revenue for these projects, a CCRC north of the Hartford would have a build out value of approximately 150 million. The other possible CCRC would be approximately 2/3 as large, although only one application would go forward. Both developers have made it clear that the economics are critical; if the process takes too long, they may not continue along in the process. Mr. Peck stated that both of these are good projects; they need to be moved along. Mr. Peck stated that the current Regulations allow Senior Living facilities as a Special Exception in any zone. This proposal is to allow CCRC to do the exact same thing. He feels that this is a minor change.

Commissioner Peterson questioned if the applications have been submitted. Mr. Peck stated that no application has been submitted, although both

developers are very serious. Their teams are in place and the preliminary designs have been done.

Commissioner Haase questioned what the timing was for the CCRC regulations. Mr. Peck stated that the public hearing is set for January 26, 2009.
Charrette Status Report

Mr. Peck stated that the Town is in the process of getting a revised proposal back to the consultant to do a focused study on the Town Center. The reason for scaling back is because of timing and available money. He stated that there is currently \$40,000 available. This 2-3 day process will hopefully start in February or early March. This proposal is significantly pared down from the original proposal. The first step of this process is to come out with detailed steps of how Simsbury should move forward. Mr. Peck stated that the Town also needs to figure out how to increase the usable area in the Center.

Commissioner George stated that he is fully in favor of this 2-3 day Charrette of the Town Center.

Commissioner Haase stated that she was reading the agenda for the Board of Selectmen and some of the addendums to that. She stated that they had some information regarding the Incentive Housing Zone and the OPM grant that the Town will be receiving. She stated that the timing for this seems to be directly related to what the Town hopes to do in the Center. She questioned how these two things would be able to work together. Mr. Peck stated that the Incentive Housing Zone is a separate but parallel piece of information. There will be 5-6 properties being looked at for that grant. He stated that these two things will be going on at the same time; there could be benefits from this.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Needham stated that he recently attended a meeting with an informal group that is looking at the sign regulations as part of a re-organization of the Zoning Regulations. The idea is to find a way to improve the visibility of local businesses but also have better control over the A-frame signs in Town. They would like the sign regulations to become clearer and more enforceable. He stated that, eventually, they will be looking to the EDC for their support regarding the new regulation.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Crimmins motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 am. Commissioner Minor seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

