

MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
MAY 16, 2016 – 5:00 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Councilor Jonathan McCallion, Chair
 Councilor Martin Dumont, Vice-Chair
 Councilor David Witham
 Councilor Dale Sprague

Administration/Staff Present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
 City Clerk, Trish Harris
 Director Public Works/Utilities, Mike Bobinsky
 Director Planning/CD, Shanna Saunders

Other: Mark Laliberte, NH Division of Resources and ED

Councilor McCallion called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

APPROVE MEETING MINUTES.

Councilor Sprague moved to approve the minutes of the April 29, 2016 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Dumont and passed, 3-0.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION WITH MARK LALIBERTE, BUSINESS RESOURCE SPECIALIST – SEACOAST REGION NH DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mark Laliberte of the Seacoast Region of NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) discussed his background. He shared some of the services available at the state. He also said the downtown area looks great. He said he is getting a sense of what we are looking for and we will be seeing more of him. He is in the area 3 days a week.

Councilor Sprague said a lot of what was invested in the downtown was done in the ground. We are trying to define ourselves, just need to find our own identity. We are not Portsmouth or Dover. We need to be Somersworth.

Councilor Sprague said he would like to see research data against another city or state. We missed the boat on advertising our projects.

Mr. Laliberte said there is a cloud based software called MC, which will do what we are looking for and compare to other cities. It is census designated. This software will collect the data and run reports so we don't have to use our manpower.

Councilor Sprague said the state has crushed us on financials, if we aren't going to get money from the state, then the state needs to be working for us.

Mr. Laliberte said he is trying to promote the ERZ (Economic Revitalization Zone). He would like to visit businesses to let them know these credits exist. The credits are based on how many people are hired or how much was put into equipment and renovations, whichever is lower.

Councilor Dumont, asked about the number of employees a company has to hire to receive the credit. Mr. Laliberte said there isn't a required number, but it is based on renovation/equipment or employees; the lesser of the two.

The total fund is \$8.25mil, with a maximum of \$240,000 per business, per year. Only one business in our area used this in 2015. Councilor Sprague said he can only assume that the unused portion is put back in to general fund.

(The following day, City Officials received a clarification email from Mr. Laliberte stating that the total fund is \$825,000, not \$8.25mil. If there is not \$825,000 in credits allocated within a calendar year, the remainder is rolled into the next calendar year. All \$825,000 have been allocated in the past years, so there has been no spillover into the future years. The entire law is RSA 162-N "Economic Recovery Zone Tax Credits.")

Councilor McCallion said he would like to do something bold in the downtown for the city to access that funding and cash out on it after.

City Manager Belmore explained that we are not an entitlement city, but we can assist or partner with businesses. We have done it in the past. We don't get block grant funding, then set up a revolving loan fund, like other cities.

There was discussion about cleaning up old police department and Breton's Cleaners property, and getting them back on the tax rolls. Can we lean on DRED for help with Brownfield grants, etc. We can reach out to them and they can help facilitate. Mr. Laliberte said he can do that.

Councilor Dumont said he wants to use the MC software and choose TIF area; set goals and values on the property and max potential. He'd like to see a focus on the area of Main Street to High Street to Indigo Hill Road. We could manually generate this information, but the software would be helpful.

Councilor McCallion said he would like to organize a joint information session here in Somersworth with some of the business owners to discuss the options. Mr. Mark and Director Saunders will talk more.

There was discussion about strength in community and our involvement with neighboring communities, including any counterparts in Maine.

Mr. Laliberte will get back to City Staff and Council on:

- Legislation and exact funding mechanism of ERZ

- Assessed values of the area of Main Street to High Street to Indigo Hill Road
- Maine counterparts
- Learn more about where we stand with real estate software

MISCELLANEOUS

Councilor McCallion distributed information on a compact micro business overlay district for Somersworth. The information included many success stories.

He would like a workshop to backup the research and see what we can put forward in the downtown.

There was discussion about the options for compact development in Somersworth.

Director Saunders said, one of the big things that thriving communities have is arts and culture. It brings business, want to live there.

The committee discussed the boot camps that Great Bay Community College has with Sig Sauer; kids work their way up and get hired.

There is a tax incentive for businesses to give their used equipment to voc/tech school. It's a tax break to the business and the kids get to use that equipment.

Councilor Dumont asked about the police department. CM, 2 moving parts, assistance with the downtown including this building and brownfield, where there city could clean up the building.

In the Somersworth Plaza, Frank Cassidy has been doing some work in the old drugstore. There is talk about putting in a Sears Catalog Store and a pizza shop. There is also an interested party in the Bank of America Building.

Dairy Queen is planning on a fall opening in Tri City Plaza. Traffic could be difficult with the side street. They need to fix the triggers on the lights. There was discussion about other traffic flows.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Dumont moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Sprague and passed, 2-1. The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Harris, City Clerk