

MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
January 21, 2020 at 5:00pm

Committee Members present: Councilor Martin P. Dumont, Sr., Chair
 Councilor Richard Michaud, Vice Chair
 Councilor Don Austin
 Councilor Crystal Paradis

Administration/Staff present: Bob Belmore, City Manager
 Scott Smith, Deputy Manager/Finance Director
 Trish Harris, City Clerk

Other: Richard Brooks, Resident, Member of ZBA

Chairman Dumont called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion made by Councilor Austin, seconded by Councilor Michaud, to accept the minutes of the October 15, 2020 meeting as presented, Motion passed 4-0.

FORM BASED CODES

City Manager Belmore stated that Director Saunders was unable to attend the meeting. He explained that a Resolution was approved a year ago to hire a consultant to develop Form Based Codes in the City of Somersworth. There was recently a Workshop presentation by Resilience Design to the full Council. Since that time, Director Saunders and he had discussed some concerns with the draft and potential changes to it. A memo from Director Saunders, dated January 17th, is included in the packet.

City Manager Belmore went through the memo, with focus on:

- b. Director Saunders suggested replacing the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) option with a waiver process.
- g. Director Saunders questioned if retail should be allowed in area 4. After brief discussion, Committee consensus was yes, to include retail space in area 4.
- h. Director Saunders questioned if we want to encourage Live/Work spaces in the Mill yard Subdistrict, area 5. After brief discussion, Committee consensus was, yes.

Richard Brooks stated that he had a concern with the minimum building heights in some areas. Some areas show a minimum number of stories, but not a maximum. He is concerned that buildings higher than 3-4 stories could diminish our Cityscape, and diminish the view of such important buildings such as the 45 Market Street Bakery and the VFW building among others. He suggested that they consider a maximum height of buildings in some areas. This could go through a conditional use process perhaps.

Richard Brook asked about use-based codes, and if these would be relaxed. Businesses have evolved a lot over years, relaxing the use-base code application may allow for more businesses to come in without the concern of needing to undergo a change of use.

Richard Brooks also asked about architectural details beyond size, height, and placement. Maybe the Form Based Code could require or recommend more of a brick look, and in some cases for a commercial style to require large 1st floor level windows, to keep with the character of the current look.

Councilor Paradis asked if public art such as murals and statues is outlined under Form Based Code. It was determined that public art is encouraged in Area 1, under street scape standards.

Councilor Michaud questioned area 5, where there is a minimum and maximum building height of 4 stories; there is a building at the mill that is 5 stories.

City Manager Belmore said he and Director Saunders will revise the draft and this will be revisited by this Committee in February.

PLAZA SIGNAGE STANDARDS

City Manager Belmore stated that currently, it is required that the signage on the Plaza be a consistent color, size, font. When Stripe 9 moved into the Plaza, they wanted a different type of sign, which was approved.

Since that time, the City Manager has worked with Staff to develop new sign criteria for the Plaza.

It was suggested that eventually EDC will approve the signage in lieu of the sign committee as this is signage to be placed onto City property.

Councilor Dumont suggest that this might be better than having the signage requests go through a land use board.

City Manager Belmore explained that Director Saunders and he would review the proposed sign standards before sending it back to EDC for approval.

PLAZA RFP

City Manager Belmore reported that the City did not receive any proposals. They received feedback from one developer, who didn't think he could make it work financially.

There was discussion about the outreach made to consultants and developers.

Councilor Dumont said timing could be the issue.

Manager Belmore said he would have staff reach out again to potential developers and try to find out what the City can do to make this a more attractive project.

MISC

Councilor Michaud asked about the former police station.

City Manager Belmore said there is presently one person interested in the property as well s a second person who had previously expressed interest and may come back to the table.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilor Austin, seconded by Councilor Paradis to adjourn the meeting at 5:35 pm. Motion passed, 4-1.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Harris, City Clerk