

MINUTES of the Economic Development Committee  
ZOOM ELECTRONIC MEETING  
April 21, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m.

Committee Members present electronically  
via Zoom:

Councilor Martin Dumont, Chairman  
Councilor Don Austin, Vice Chairman  
Councilor Richard R. Michaud  
Councilor Crystal Paradis

Staff Members present electronically  
via Zoom:

City Manager Bob Belmore  
Director of Planning and CD Michelle Mears  
City Clerk Jonathan Slaven

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The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dumont at 5:00 pm.

As Chairman of the Somersworth Economic Development Committee, I, Councilor Martin Dumont find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Committee have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform. The public was asked to submit comments via email to [jslaven@somersworth.com](mailto:jslaven@somersworth.com) or [bbelmore@somersworth.com](mailto:bbelmore@somersworth.com) by Wednesday April 21, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

APPROVE MINUTES OF JANUARY 20, 2021

*Councilor Austin made a motion to accept the January 20, 2021 minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilor Paradis and passed 4-0 by roll call vote.*

VARIOUS PROJECT UPDATES

**Former Police Station** – Manager Belmore stated he has been in touch with Mike McCluskey of the NHDES who informed him of delays in the processing of a grant application for Brownfield cleanup of the former police station. The application is scheduled to be approved at the Governor and Executive Council meeting on May 19. Belmore said there are a few people interested in the property and suggested we should probably complete an RFP process or at least advertise in some manner.

**Former Breton Cleaners Site** – Manager Belmore stated the City is still waiting on final approval of a Remedial Action Implementation Report for environmental cleanup at the former Breton Cleaners site. He said this process could take another month or two and the next step is to apply for a ground water management permit from NH DES. The City will need to get proposals from environmental engineering firms to complete

the application and recommended using Credere Associates as a sole source since they have been the environmental consultant for this project. Belmore stated there are 7 monitoring wells on the property showing improvement. After the first round of necessary testing, the City can consider transferring any additional testing to a buyer of the property if the City chooses to sell it. Belmore stated the property could go through a simple RFP process once the time comes. Councilor Dumont asked if this cleanup process was all expected. Belmore replied that it is all anticipated, though there has been one necessary incidental repair done to one of the monitoring wells.

**National Guard Building** – Manager Belmore stated the National Guard Reuse Commission is currently looking into options for the building and the SRPC is helping with the phase 1 environmental assessment. Belmore explained he has had conference calls with SRPC and their environmental consultant Nobis Engineering who will assist with a site walk once approval is obtained to do so. Councilor Dumont asked if there was a known timeline for the building. Manager Belmore stated it was in the hands of the Commission.

**Somersworth Plaza** – Manager Belmore stated he had a meeting with some tenants of the Plaza about three weeks ago. He received mixed feedback for and against development and some felt they did not have enough information to provide comment. A potential developer, Somevision, LLC. plans on meeting with abutters to the Plaza to address concerns and receive feedback. Belmore stated no actions are intended until plans become more tangible. He said any effort to develop the Plaza will attempt to be equitable for all involved; including the developer, tenants, and the City. Councilor Paradis asked if the rumor she heard about the Wentworth Douglass Health building moving was true. Manager Belmore stated that he had talked to a WDH site manager and they are not looking to leave the area or site. Councilor Michaud stated he understands a few of the tenants to be very headstrong against any development of the plaza whatsoever, but would like to see an idea that all can get on board with. Manager Belmore reminded the Committee of a charrette held with decent representation of the Community where there was support for some sort of development to the Plaza parking lot. He also mentioned it was a Council goal identified in this year's goal setting session as well. Councilor Paradis said no plan has actually been submitted and those with concerns will have ample time to voice them. Manager Belmore agreed and stated that not only will there be a Council public meeting and vote, additionally the Planning Board will have to hold Public Hearings, therefore tenants, abutters, and those with concerns will have several chances to provide input. Councilor Austin said he hopes peoples' voices are heard and said that if they come to the table in good faith, he is confident an agreeable solution can be found. Councilor Dumont stated there was extensive evaluations of the Plaza leading up to the charrette and noted the City did not get any bidders during a couple of RFP processes. He suggested perhaps the business owners may want to think about creating a business owner's association and purchase the plaza parking lot. Citing George Ball, he stated two keys to development are patience and confidentiality.

**Aclara** – Manager Belmore stated he has reached out to Eric Chinburg regarding the possible purchase and development of the Aclara property, but has no updates to relay. He stated he is unclear on any timeline at this point.

### MISCELLANEOUS

Manager Belmore briefly informed the Committee of a developer interested in the former Prince's Garage who is working with the SRPC on an environmental cleanup phase 1 report.

Councilor Dumont asked if there are still plans for a chocolate shop to occupy the former Chamber of Commerce building. Director Mears stated yes.

Councilor Dumont inquired if there is anything in the City's sign permit regulations limiting the time a vacated business has to remove their sign. Manager Belmore replied he would have staff look into it and bring information back to the Committee.

Councilor Michaud said he plans on having conversations with Manager Belmore regarding blighted buildings in his Ward and will discuss possible solutions for having property owners clean them up.

ADJOURN

*Councilor Austin made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Michaud and passed 4-0 by roll call vote. Meeting adjourned at 5:38 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

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Jonathan Slaven, City Clerk