

MINUTES of the ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
June 16, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m.

Committee Members present electronically:

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

Staff Members present electronically:

City Manager Bob Belmore
Director of Planning and CD Michelle Mears
City Clerk Jonathan Slaven
Economic Development Manager Robin Comstock

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

APPROVE MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2021

Councilor Paradis made a motion to accept the April 21, 2021 minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilor Michaud and passed 4-0.

WAYFINDING SIGNS

Manager Belmore stated that staff narrowed down signs to direct people to City Hall, Library, Veterans Memorial Park, Post Office, and the Plaza. Manager Belmore stated the project has a budget of \$15k and asked the Committee for their thoughts. Councilor Paradis stated that signage down by Market Basket directing drivers to downtown businesses would be a good idea. Councilor Dumont talked about a concept for a sign that included the names of various businesses. Dumont suggested the idea of a permitting process for individual businesses to purchase signage to be placed in a satellite location. Councilor Austin warned against indicating specific businesses on signs as it may seem like the City is playing favorites. Ms. Comstock mentioned that her time working for the Chamber of Commerce in Portsmouth has taught her the struggles of dealing with individual business wayfinding signs. She explained businesses come and go much quicker than people realize. Councilor Dumont added that there is not a large number of businesses downtown and the ones that do exist do not always have regular hours. He added he likes the idea of wayfinding signage; he just doesn't feel there is an urgent need for the City yet. Councilor Austin mentioned that the Sports Dome currently being constructed is a great example of a business that could draw people to downtown, it is just unfortunate it isn't really close to downtown. Manager Belmore stated that the Sports Dome went through the Planning Board and they stated they were going to install signage to direct people to the Turnpike, High Street, and Downtown areas. Councilor Austin suggested having them install signage pointing to the High School-CTC as well. Councilor Paradis suggested signage pointing toward the parks as well. The Committee reached a consensus to have staff explore more options and bring them back to Committee. Manager Belmore also mentioned a push to receive a grant to add historic/HDC designations to street signs.

MISCELLANEOUS STAFF UPDATES

Manager Belmore explained to the Committee that after speaking with tenants of the Somersworth Plaza, the developer who was interested is stepping back at the moment. There was a general discussion on how the City might proceed.

Councilor Dumont mentioned that a constituent raised the question of adding sidewalks near the new Royal Drive apartments where it appears to be missing at the Flatley apartments at the end of Tri City Road.

Councilor Dumont stated that the owner of Hill Top Chevrolet inquired about why he had to utilize a 3rd party engineering firm from Massachusetts. Manager Belmore replied that it is because developers are required to pay for a 3rd party review and the company, Horsley Witten, was the best firm interviewed.

ADJOURN

Councilor Austin made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Michaud and passed 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Slaven, City Clerk