

MINUTES of the ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
February 5, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.

Committee Members present:

Councilor Paul Goodwin, Chairman
Councilor Robert Gibson, Vice Chair
Councilor Richard R. Michaud
Councilor Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro

Staff Members present:

City Manager, Bob Belmore
Finance Director, Scott Smith
Director of Planning & Community Development,
Michelle Mears
Planning Technician, Dana Crossley
Deputy City Clerk, Ammy Ramsey

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Goodwin at 6:03 p.m.

APPROVE PAST MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 11, 2023

Councilor Gibson made a motion to accept the December 11, 2023 minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilor Goodwin and passed 4-0.

ONBOARDING GENERAL DISCUSSION

Councilor Goodwin requested some background information concerning what the Committee has been working on or any initiatives that could be continued with this Committee with new members.

Councilor Gibson mentioned that they have been talking about reviewing the development approval process, as well as looking at the Zoning Ordinance for housing regulations that could possibly change to encourage development.

City Manager Belmore read the following from Section 6 of the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to the role of the Economic Development Committee:

The purpose of the Committee is to be a liaison to the public and business community in regards to the economic conditions of commerce and industry within the City, to consider matters relating to the economic development of the City, and matters relating to the promotion and marketing of the City, as well as other matters referred to it. To review and recommend to the City Council any changes regarding property maintenance and enforcement, housing code review and compliance, and overall housing related issues.

City Manager Belmore mentioned a few major projects that have been worked on which includes: 1 Winter Street (former Breton's Cleaners), former Police Station, former National Guard Readiness property, Hilltop School, and the Somersworth Plaza. Director of Planning, Michelle Mears, also mentioned that the Committee has also been involved with the signage for the Historic District and wayfinding signs.

MODULAR ZONING

Councilor Gibson mentioned that he would like to look at the Zoning Ordinance to allow for modular housing in a wider area to help with the housing crisis. There was some discussion pertaining to when the Zoning Ordinance was last reviewed or modified for modular housing, and it was determined to be quite a ways back. Councilor Goodwin mentioned adding this subject as a goal setting item.

DEVELOPER OUTREACH

Councilor Gibson stated he would like to look for a way to reach different types of developers to look at the same property and present a variety of options for the City to consider. There was some discussion pertaining the way RFPs are done and how the Committee can better market any City properties for development.

FORMER BRETONS CLEANERS, 1 WINTER STREET

City Manager Belmore informed the Committee that the City Council voted to turn this property into a parking lot with the possible notion of having a food truck spot included. Manager Belmore presented the Committee with two conceptual design quotes from consultants for discussion

Councilor Gibson mentioned offering this property to a real estate agent because they have had luck recently going in that direction but understands this property is not ideal because of the sewer line placement and monitoring wells.

Councilor Goodwin stated he would like to see the City engage the Community and get public input to see what the Community members would like to see on the property.

Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro mentioned her thoughts of a public art display but supports reaching out to the Community for their input.

Discussion continued regarding reaching out to the Community and what has happened with the property in the past. The Committee also reviewed the property details and discussed the monitoring wells and sewer lines and how those items affect any potential project.

The Committee took a brief recess.

GOAL SETTING

Councilor Goodwin stated he would like to identify some goals that the Committee can prioritize going forward. The Committee identified the following:

- Revision of Chapter 31, Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, which adopts the provisions of NH RSA 79-E
- Researching a land bank
- Industrial development Authority
- Housing conversations
- Updating the Zoning Ordinance – limiting car oriented businesses
- Re-branding/Signage

- Part-time economic position, perhaps a shared position with Berwick.
- Parking assessment – Manager Belmore having mentioned that SRPC will be doing an assessment without any additional charge this April/May. He provided the members with a Memorandum from Director Mears that provided more info on the proposed study.
- Wayfinding
- Looking into what type of businesses we have and what we could use
- Biking/ general mobility
- Developers invited to meeting/s
- One-way traffic pattern for downtown

Councilor Goodwin mentioned looking at these items at the next meeting and prioritizing.

MISCELLANEOUS

There we no miscellaneous discussed.

ADJOURN

Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Gibson and passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ammy Ramsey, Deputy City Clerk