

MINUTES of the ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

April 1, 2024 @ 5:30 p.m.

Committee Members present: Councilor Paul Goodwin, Chairman
Councilor Richard R. Michaud, Vice Chair
Councilor Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro

Committee Members Absent: Councilor Robert Gibson

Staff Members present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
Finance Director, Scott Smith
Director of Planning & Community Development,
Michelle Mears
City Clerk, Kristen LaPanne

Others in Attendance: Matt Assia of Chinburg Properties

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Goodwin at 5:30 p.m.

APPROVE PAST MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 4, 2024

Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro made a motion to accept the March 4, 2024 minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilor Michaud and passed 3-0.

REVIEW APPLICATION FROM 200 MAIN STREET LLC FOR City Ordinance, CHAPTER 31 TAX RELIEF Incentive Application

Councilor Goodwin stated that he will recuse himself from the discussion and vote pertaining to the application from 200 Main Street LLC because he is an employee of the developer, Chinburg Properties. He asked Councilor Michaud, to lead the discussion as the Vice Chair of the Committee. There was an inquiry about the historical component of the project, Councilor Goodwin noted that there is a request for that information that is pending within the current submitted application.

City Manager Belmore read from the Chinburg Properties application cover letter which in addition to their request of 11 years of tax relief in accordance with Chapter 31, Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, also requests a waiver from all City fees that are associated with the project including application fees, permit fees, water/sewer connection fees, and impact fees. Additionally, Chinburg Properties is also requesting support from the City in obtaining grant proceeds to aid with the removal or rebuilding of the Main Street pedestrian bridge.

Mr. Assia provided the Committee with some of the history of Chinburg Properties and their success within the City of Somersworth. He shared that Chinburg Properties first came to Somersworth in 2006-2007 where they constructed units within the top floors of the mill building on Canal Street which now houses about 69 units. He also spoke about their historical rehabilitation project at the former Hilltop School in 2019-2020 that created 22 units, he added that they received approval to utilize the Chapter 31, Community Revitalization Tax Relief for that project. Mr. Assia shared some of the public benefits that the City gained from the rehabilitation of the former Hilltop School.

Regarding the proposal from Chinburg Properties to rehabilitate 200 Main Street, Mr. Assia stated that one of the structures burnt down due to a recent fire and that there is one building that still remains intact which they wish to move forward with and are requesting assistance through Chapter 31. He shared the benefits that the public of Somersworth would receive including enhancing the economic and social viability of the Downtown by returning a vacant building back to use, providing a publicly accessible river walk along the Salmon Falls River, improving a historic building that is important to the local Community, improving energy efficiency to a historical building, promoting development of compact municipal centers consistent with RSA 9-B, and increasing non-subsidized residential housing in the Downtown Revitalization District.

Mr. Assia stated that the proposed project offers approximately 145 units between three separate buildings with about 80% of the units being studio and 1-bedroom, and the remainder being 2-bedroom units. He continued to share some of the preliminary design ideas and he noted that this project would be the fourth in a series of projects where Chinburg Properties was able to save historical buildings, rehabilitate them and build around them to enhance the project.

Mr. Assia reported that Chinburg Properties is requesting tax relief for a total of 11 years; 5-years for the qualifying historical structure, 2- years for a project that results in new non-subsidized residential units, and 4 years for substantial rehabilitation of a structure that is listed on or determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. He briefly spoke about the significant project costs and he stated that any waivers granted by the City pertaining to associated project fees, would be utilized towards making this project viable.

Director of Planning & Community Development, Michelle Mears inquired if Chinburg Properties plans to seek any State or Federal grants that would conflict with the provisions of the City's Chapter 31. Mr. Assia clarified that they are not seeking State or Federal grants related to this project.

There was discussion regarding the pedestrian bridge, City Manager Belmore confirmed that the City is awaiting additional information from Attorney David Campbell who represents the Railroad regarding the bridge and potential grant opportunities. Manager Belmore also clarified that there would not be impact fees, however, there would be fees for water and sewer connections. Finance Director Smith stated that the expected cost of connection fees would be approximately \$313,000, or \$1,800 per bedroom. Mr. Assia inquired about the betterment district and Director Smith confirmed that the betterment district is no longer applicable.

Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro inquired about if there would be any percentage of the units considered affordable housing. Mr. Assia responded that the units would be listed at market rates.

Councilor Michaud confirmed that he is in favor of the request for 11-years, but he inquired with City staff on their opinion. Director Mears stated that the application is still pending the historical component of the request, but she feels it is eligible for at least 7-years of the request. Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro commented that she feels that the list of public benefits for the District is clear to her and the City is in need of more housing. She also favors the idea of the pedestrian bridge and she inquired about grant opportunities to improve the bridge. Manager Belmore stated that there are Federal grants that are available to improve bridges, however, the grant would only apply to public bridges. He also added that the railroad crossing has been flagged on Main Street and it may require additional signalization. Manager Belmore made note of other projects throughout the City that required upgrades to railroad crossings.

Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro made a motion to support the Chinburg Properties request for 7-years of tax relief per Chapter 31 of the City's Ordinances regarding the 200 Main Street LLC development, with an

additional 4-years added pending the historical component that is still to be determined. The motion was seconded by Councilor Michaud and passed 2-0-1. Councilor Goodwin abstained.

MISCELLANEOUS

City Manager Belmore reminded the Committee of the need for volunteers to assist with the Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) parking study pertaining to the City's Downtown area. There was a question regarding the number of volunteers needed as well as the timing that volunteers would be needed. Director Mears responded that she would get clarification, however, she believes that it would be one week day and one weekend day and she explained her understanding of how the study would take place. Councilor Goodwin stated that if volunteers are expected to walk around documenting the City's parking, he would suggest that the study take place in warmer weather. Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro inquired about an incentive that could be offered to volunteers that participate in the parking study. Councilor Goodwin suggested a continental breakfast and coffee. Director Mears confirmed that she would reach out to SRPC to inquire about the number of volunteers needed for the study. She also stated that Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro suggested counting the number of EV / Hybrid vehicles that are around to help determine the number of charging stations needed since EV inquiries have been added to site plan applications.

Manager Belmore mentioned that the Committee's Public Input session scheduled on Thursday, April 11th has been posted on the City's website as well as on Channel 22. Councilor Goodwin stated that he will also share the session on social media, Manager Belmore confirmed that the City will post it on their social media as well. Councilor Goodwin inquired about getting a map of the sewer line dimensions that run through the property so he can get a better idea of restrictions to the property with regards to potential developments.

ADJOURN

Councilor Michaud made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro and passed 3-0. The meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen LaPanne City Clerk