

MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM

October 27, 2016 – 8:30 AM.

Committee Members present: Councilor McCallion, Chair
Councilor Martin Dumont
Councilor David Witham
Councilor Dale Sprague

Administration/staff present: City Manager Bob Belmore
Director Shanna Saunders

Other: Jean Gill, SEDC

Chairman McCallion called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councilor Witham, seconded by Councilor Dumont, made a motion to accept the minutes of September 15, 2016. Motion Passed 3-0.

FORMER POLICE STATION BUILDING & SITE

Councilor Witham said it is time that we sell the former police station. Put it on the market with deed restrictions. Get it back on the tax rolls and move forward.

Councilor Dumont said he is in agreement with selling, but they need to prepare the building for better value. He believes lending institutions will not finance the property in its current condition.

There was discussion about having City Staff look into the cost for the cleanup. That could be a negotiating strategy for a buyer.

City Manager Belmore said that we have a phase one environmental assessment, and there is not plan to move forward with phase two. Phase one shows that the level of concern is minimal. Director Saunders stated that the SRPC grant may not allow for a Phase II assessment.

Councilor Dumont said there seems to be a lot movement within the City. We want to see new businesses coming in.

Councilor Sprague said, let it sit. We need to make sure a good business moves into that building. Let's get serious about doing something in the plaza. Bundle in the police station.

City Manager Belmore said he and Director Saunders has been looking into Plan New Hampshire. They bring in architects and engineers and create a viable plan on how to market and develop a property. It is a competitive grant and they are looking at the Plaza and could include the former police department.

Councilor Witham said he likes this idea. We aren't just sitting idle. Something is happening.

STRAFFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (SEDC)

City Manager explained that he requested information and received a letter that outlines the formation of SEDC from Dennis McCann, Executive Director of the Strafford Economic Development Corporation. Jean Gill, an employee of SEDC was in attendance.

Councilor McCallion stated that he wants to know where the vote was that took the authority from the city and gave it to SEDC.

Councilor Dumont said the Somersworth Industrial Development Authority (SIDA) was originally designed to assist Somersworth Businesses. Mr. Gill said the initial funds came from the State.

Councilor McCallion, this must have been voted on by the City of Somersworth. He wants to know when that happened. When did we give it away to Strafford County. We want more investment in Somersworth. He wants to know when this changed from SIDA to SEDC.

They discussed the history of SEDC and areas where SEDC has helped businesses in Somersworth. They have made several loans to Somersworth businesses.

City staff will look into minutes of the Industrial Authority.

MICRO FLATS/BUSINESSES

Councilor Witham said the planning board had a good discussion about Microflats, and they are apprehensive. There are concerns including creation of a "frat house" situation.

Director Saunders submitted a memo; 2 things were added; a lease and one on-site parking spot.

Councilor McCallion said there is a need to revitalize, revamp the downtown. There is some concern. If we put the TIF into play and market vacant buildings, there are a lot of people who may want to try something like this.

There was discussion about Form Based Codes, where an area can be defined. The Committee consensus was not to move forward with a microflats ordinance change.

Councilor Sprague, seconded by Councilor Dumont, made a motion to direct the City Manager to look further into Form Based Codes. The motion passed 3-0.

MISCELLANEOUS

Councilor Dumont asked for updates on Aclara, and an update on the Dairy Queen. Dairy Queen Staff had a preconstruction meeting. Demolition is scheduled for 2 weeks and they plan to be opened by Memorial Day, 2017.

He asked for an update on Somersworth Storage, and mentioned that Leaven Bread, will now be Trakside Tacos. Staff provided updates.

There was discussion about a property on Indigo Hill Road which was doing some reconstruction. They were blocking part of the road and did not have flaggers; fencing is not required for residential home construction.

There was discussion about the fencing at the new Staples. It is blocking an entrance. It's a traffic flow issue.

Director Saunders gave an update on the TIF district process. A district cannot be more than 8% assessed valuation of the entire Community. They are looking at the areas of Main Street, High Street, and the River Walk. She submitted a memo with the steps involved to adopt a TIF district.

Councilor McCallion asked if there was a way we can search and rank the properties in need. It would help our assessment.

Director Saunders shared a map of the projected TIF District. Councilor Dumont said there was proposal that was submitted back in 2003, to build a bridge to cross into Maine near what is now Aclara. Councilor Sprague said he would like to see the old Coca Cola plant on Green Street included in the TIF

Suggestion was to have a City Council workshop in the future, after a few more Economic Development Committee Meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Dumont, seconded by Councilor Witham. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 10:10 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Harris, City Clerk