

MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
March 03, 2017, 4:00pm.

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

Administration/Staff present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
 City Planner, Shanna Saunders
 Assessing/Code Clerk, Christien DuBois

Others: Judi Currie

Councilor McCallion called the meeting to order at 4:12pm

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Motion made by Councilor Witham, seconded by Councilor Sprague, to accept the minutes of the meeting of December 1, 2016 as presented. Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 4-0.

CHINBURG PURCHASE AND SALE FOR HILLTOP SCHOOL UPDATE

City Manager Belmore stated that the purchase & sale agreement for property has been completed and that Chinburg Builders will be submitting a 79E application.

Councilor Witham stated that he was unconcerned with how the civic space on the interior building is used but did have an interest in knowing details for how the exterior park.

Councilor McCallion posed the possibility of amending the ordinance overlay for the property to increase the number of units in the building from 20 to 30.

Councilor Sprague was concerned in doing so due to the possibility of the property being sold shortly after renovations were completed and due to the fact that the outside area was important to the community, especially the surrounding neighborhood. Councilor Sprague also expressed concern over opening the City up to precedent in the future should this be construed to be spot zoning.

Councilor Witham motioned to amend the Hilltop Overlay Ordinance to allow for 30 apartments for Hilltop School.

Councilor Witham stated that this is a unique property in a unique zone and that the City isn't taking a commercial zone and carving it out for a residential area. So it does not seem to be spot zoning.

Councilor Dumont noted that the building comes with the overlay. Doing this with other properties could get the City into trouble.

Director Saunders stated that this might be spot zoning but it is a unique spot and has been unique for many years and the City should be careful to not continue the practice with other properties.

Councilor Dumont seconded the motion by Councilor Witham. A general discussion on the pros and cons ensued. The issue of parking spaces and COAST bus stops was discussed in specific terms.

Director Saunders mentioned that the City does take into consideration bus stops but not necessarily when parking space determinations are made.

Councilor Dumont posed the question of what other communities do with living spaces that do not have robust parking areas.

Director Saunders stated that she can only speak to Nashua and Manchester but exemptions are utilized to parking areas and residents have to figure out their own parking. Councilor Sprague added that Portsmouth gets creative with parking enforcement.

Councilor Witham stated that the Council has been very clear that outside green space exists so that it can enhance the neighborhoods.

Discussion on the topic concluded and the motion carried 4-0 to move the proposal forward to the full Council.

PLAN NH GRANT APPLICATION PROPOSAL

City Manager Belmore stated that the Plan NH Grant Proposal was discussed at the prior Economic Development meeting. City Manager Belmore provided an overview of the program, which brings groups of municipal experts to examine an area of the city to put forward ideas to advance the City's vision. The area we are focusing on is downtown, particularly the Plaza. City Manager Belmore stated that the event would cost the city only \$5000 plus in kind services.

Director Saunders stated that the event would probably occur late fall if accepted.

Councilor Sprague questioned what the goal would be for this event.

aCouncilor Sprague stated that many people don't make decisions on what is good for the city, but rather what is good for them. Councilor Sprague said that he is OK with taking input but

when it becomes the vision that we are supposed to go by all the time many of the goals put forward aren't attainable.

Councilor McCallion said that if nothing else, the event opens up new opportunities and brings the City more information.

Councilor Dumont stated that the event brings in new ideas and concepts that will help us refine the City's vision. Many developers want to rebuild buildings and the City seems to want to reuse existing ones and this event will help us refine this idea and provide additional insight.

Councilor Dumont motioned to accept the Plan NH Grant proposal seconded by Councilor McCallion.

Councilor Witham asked if other than charrettes, are monies better spent by hiring a consultant who has expertise in urban development? Director Saunders answered not for \$5000.

Councilor Sprague noted that UNH had done a similar project for Berlin for free in the past and raised the idea of doing the same in Somersworth.

City Manager Belmore stated that the people who run the Plan NH event are municipal professionals who can ensure the conversation stays grounded. City Manager Belmore also said that City staff would also be in attendance to assist.

Councilor Sprague inquired as to whether or not Berwick and Somersworth could do a joint event stating what happens over in Berwick is important to Somersworth.

Councilor McCallion asked if UNH could also be a part of the event.

Councilor Dumont expressed confidence that members of the public who will come to the event will keep suggestions feasible and not put forward unmarketable ideas.

Councilor Witham said that past studies should be shared like the master plan, which should be revisited as part of the event.

Motion carried to support the Plan NH Grant application unanimously 4-0.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING DISTRICT (TIF) UPDATE

Director Saunders stated that to create the TIF District, a majority of residential areas were cut out to focus on the business downtown area and parts of the Riverwalk. Director Saunders said that language had been pulled from three other communities to draft the language of the TIF District.

Councilor Sprague requested maps and more information about the TIF
Councilor Witham asked for clarification of what exactly a TIF District does.

Director Saunders answered that incremental taxes from redevelopment raised within the district will be used for public improvements within that district.

Councilor Witham followed up with how the TIF District acts alongside 79E and if you can create projections of what the impact will be.

Director Saunders answered that 79E can work with the TIF. There is no easy way to create preliminary projections, of what the impact will be.

Councilor Sprague stated that he is concerned of the effect the Tax Cap will have on revenue for the TIF District.

Councilor Witham said that the 79E can be a valuable tool and we should weigh the value of the 79E against the TIF. Councilor Dumont then asked what the status of 79E legislation was.

Councilor Sprague explained that it had been rejected and asked how long TIF districts last.

Director Saunders answered that TIF districts can last as long as they are mandated to last and that some can last as long as 20 years.

Councilor Witham stated that he didn't know enough to make an informed decision at this time. Councilor McCallion said that he believed the TIF District could spur growth. Councilor Sprague asked how many TIF districts could be in place at one time.

Director Saunders stated that there can be as many as the City decides at one time as long as a certain percentage of total acreage and assessed value isn't exceeded.

Councilor McCallion stated that he would like to see Dover's TIF District.

MISCELLANEOUS

City Manager Belmore stated that Malley Farm wants a small amendment to their lease. They would like to landscape the area in front that includes the miniature golf area.

After discussion, Councilor Witham motioned to support a Resolution to the full Council to expand the lease of Malley Farm as requested, seconded by Councilor Dumont.

Motion based unanimously 4-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilor Witham, seconded by Councilor Dumont, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried with a 4-0 vote and the meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christien DuBois Assessing/Code Clerk