



Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 5, 2011 – City Hall Council Chambers

Council Committee Members present: Jon McCallion, Chairman, Dale Sprague, & Robin Jarvis. Others present: Councilors Marty Pepin and Dave Witham; City Manager Robert Belmore; Acting Director/City Planner Dave Sharples; Rene Philpott, Lara Willard, Diane Griffith, Frank Menez, Linda Chaston, Sherie Dinger, Beth Salinger, Jennifer Soldati, Doug Watson, Bill Sweeney, Emmett Soldati, Matt Spencer, Patty Rooney.

Chairman McCallion called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. The Chairman made some initial introductory welcome remarks in regards to discussing the Hilltop School's future re-use, acknowledging the invitation sent to the Friends of Somersworth, Vision 2020 Committee members and to the Somersworth Housing Authority.

There was a discussion in regards to whether the facility should be heated through the winter months and would there be building damage done if not heated. It was suggested that heating the building might expose the facility to water damage should pipes malfunction as well as the cost for initial repairs. Bill Sweeney mentioned mold concerns and said he would research the issue of potential mold problems. Bob Belmore said he would have the City building inspector do periodic inspections should the building remain vacant and unheated through the winter months.

It was stated that the Friends of Somersworth (now incorporated) had some 15 letters of intent, or so, to rent space from artists as well as an initial plan to use the first floor as community space. Frank Menez suggested looking at Dover's McConnell center for an example of types of occupancy. It was mentioned that renting space to social service agencies could open up grant awards. Sheri Dinger said the City's Re-Use Committee offered five or so different options for the building's use. Dale Sprague suggested getting some contractor costs in order to present some scenarios on the building's intended use. There was discussion in regards to getting the City's commitment to lease the building to the Friends in a partnership with the City; the importance of this joint partnership was stressed several times during the meeting. Dave Witham suggested presenting a plan and timeline to more firmly understand the re-use. The issue to address zoning was also discussed and exploring the feasibility of a zoning change. Several spoke to needing support from the Council to include a positive signal and an eventual commitment from the City Council. It was suggested that we should all collaborate towards a plan for the City's benefit.

It was agreed that the EDC would plan to meet on Wednesday, October 26, at 5:00pm to continue the discussion with the Friends of Somersworth.

Motion to adjourn by Dale Sprague, second –Robin Jarvis; U/A at 6:20 pm;
Respectfully submitted,
Robert M. Belmore