

Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

Members Present

Councilors Jon McCallion, Cody Donohue, Robin Jarvis,
City Manager Bob Belmore, Director Dave Sharples, EDM Christine Davis, Emmett Soldati

Agenda

- A. Approval of the Minutes-March 15, 2013 minutes tabled (not available)

- B. Friends of Somersworth Discussion
Emmett Soldati presented various plans for renovation of the Hilltop School. The group initially was looking to do a partial renovation, get in a tenant, and continue to fundraise with the goal of completing the renovation of the school in several stages. Due to the challenge of acquiring grants as a young nonprofit they are not able to raise enough funds to even do a partial renovation within a reasonable timeframe. At this point they have raised approximately \$5,000.00. They would like the City to release some funds to do a formal study on the cost of a full building renovation. Additionally the Friends of Somersworth would like the City to take out a bond to pay for the renovations which would be paid back from the revenue produced by the building. Councilor Jarvis stated that it would be best if the group were able to get some preliminary renovation costs before they asked for funds to do the study. She also suggested they develop an organized plan with a cost analysis and explain how their plan differs enough from previous plans to justify a study. Councilor McCallion added that if they could find an anchor tenant with clear space needs that perhaps they could exchange 6-12 months of rent for upfront costs. The ED Committee acknowledged and commended the effort put forth by the Friends of Somersworth. Both councilor McCallion and councilor Jarvis felt that a good foundation/argument would need to be in place before they present to the full City Council. Emmett said they have met with several interested parties but that those groups want to wait until a plan to renovate has been secured and funded before they sign a lease. Suggestions about connecting with UNH to offer part of the building as a business incubator were made as well as potentially using some of the space for the CTC during their renovations. Emmett is going to work with Christine Davis on a written proposal that will be brought back to the committee for further discussion.

- C. MMANH Fellowship Grant
Christine Davis submitted a grant application that would cover half the cost of an intern who would focus on creating a social media plan for the City. The social media tools would also be used as part of the communication plan for the downtown improvement project. Additionally, the intern would work on some zoning research projects. Grants awardees will be announced in May.

D. Misc.

Commuter Rail Upgrade-Discussions are being held with the town of Berwick to gauge the interest and possible efforts to have the rail upgraded to bring commuter service to the region.

Wellness-A Walk to School Day will be held in May. Idlehurst Elementary will be holding a bike rodeo in June. Both Wentworth Douglass and Frisbie Hospitals offer community wellness programs at their facilities. The City may be able to promote some of those opportunities through our monthly e-newsletters.

Other Business- None

Meeting adjourned at 9:33am.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Davis