

MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
May 15, 2018 4:30pm.

Committee Members present: Councilor Martin Dumont, Chairman
 Councilor Jonathan McCallion, Vice Chairman
 Councilor Dale R. Sprague
 Councilor Richard Michaud

Administration/Staff present: Bob Belmore, City Manager
 Shanna Saunders, Director of Development and Planning
 Robin Comstock, Economic Development Manager
 Trish Harris, City Clerk

Others: Richard Brooks

Chairman Dumont called the meeting to order at 4:30pm.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING – April 24, 2018

Motion made by Councilor McCallion seconded by Councilor Dumont to accept the minutes of the previous meeting of as presented. Motion passed 2-0, with 2 abstentions from Councilors Sprague and Michaud.

HDC ORDINANCE REVIEW UPDATE

City Manager Belmore stated that the HDC Chair met with him and Director Saunders to discuss updating the current HDC section of the City Ordinance. If any changes are made to the Ordinance, they will have to re-submit an application to remain a Certified Local Government and an overall district survey might need to be performed.

There was a brief discussion about Dover's Heritage Commission. Councilor Sprague would like to see Dover's process for the Committee's review.

There was discussion about inviting a State CLG Representative and HDC Chair to a future meeting.

This will remain under old business on the next agenda.

Mr. Brooks requested to speak. The request was denied by the Committee, for the sake of time.

FORM BASED CODES

Director Saunders distributed a memo regarding Dover Form-based Code Vs. Somersworth's present regulations.

There was lengthy discussion about the 18 points in the memo.

The Committee also discussed Laconia's Design regulations and points system.

Councilor Dumont said he likes the idea of Form-based Codes and would like more information. Councilor McCallion wants it tightened up before the Planning Board looks at it. He likes the points system of Laconia.

Councilor Sprague said it is a more useful tool to the development of the City. It hones in and defines what we want to do.

Councilor Michaud is in agreement and would like more information.

The Committee was in agreement and asked the City Manager to seek professional consultants for quotes for developing a Form-based Code Ordinance for the City.

This will remain under old business on the next agenda.

LAND USE BOARDS AND PERMIT PROCESS

City Manager Belmore stated that Staff is working on ideas for the Land Use Boards and permitting process to make it more efficient.

Some ideas that they have are, a printed step by step process, like a checklist, and informal development assistance meetings for investors who are looking to invest in Somersworth properties, to explain the permitting process and other details that an investor would need to be aware of regarding a property that they are interested in.

There was discussion about staffing and the current permitting process. Councilor Sprague said there are things we need to hone in on. Somersworth can't drive businesses away. This has a huge effect on our taxes and our economic growth.

City Manager Belmore said no community has a perfect system. Communications is the hardest thing to maintain. Somersworth Staff is always working on the process and striving to improve. He noted that Director Saunders is placing an additional item on all land use boards agendas to talk about rules and procedures, conflicts of interest, responsibilities of committee members, zoning and planning ordinances, etc.

Councilor Sprague, seconded by Councilor Michaud, made a motion to waive rules to allow Richard Brooks to speak. Motion passed 4-0. Mr. Brooks stated that the Historic District Commission is aware that many of the members are not familiar with rules and regulations and they are educating themselves to make steps to improve the HDC process.

PLAZA RFP

Final draft will be available for the next Committee meeting.

This will remain under old business on the next agenda.

MISCELLANEOUS

EDM Comstock reported that she, Director Saunders and City Manager Belmore visited the Port Authority. They had an entertaining and educational discussion with Mr. Geno Marcon, Port Director, regarding the foreign trade zone that is scheduled for federal approval this June, and incentive for duties to be waived through this zone. This could be advantageous to conducting business in Somersworth.

Councilor Sprague said that there are time limitations and regulations, including a reduction in duty depending on how long the product has been housed.

EDM Comstock reported that the recent Downtown Round Table had about 12 members of the community in attendance. Many terrific ideas were shared, and they are working on a master checklist. Some of the ideas shared were a Summer film series to be held in the Plaza Parking lot, and new signage for way finding. There will be monthly Downtown Round Tables.

Councilor Sprague reported that the House Public Works and Highways Committee will be in Somersworth on June 4th. We should consider a welcome for the Committee.

Councilor Sprague, seconded by Councilor Michaud, made a motion to allow Mr. Brooks to speak regarding the HDC Ordinance Review Update, since there is time remaining at the end of the meeting. The motion passed, 4-0.

Mr. Brooks said the HDC worked diligently after Council's Request. He stated that the current HDC ordinance is vague, and they need to better define the content, and they will get better results.

City Manager Belmore said he has discussed the HDC work with the Chair of the HDC and everything is on hold now, until scheduling a meeting with the state LGC representatives. The Chair has concerns with moving forward at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilor McCallion, seconded by Councilor Michaud, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried with a 3-1 vote and the meeting adjourned at 5:48 p.m. Sprague opposed.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Harris, City Clerk