

MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
September 16, 2019 at 6:00pm

Committee Members present: Councilor Martin P. Dumont, Sr., Chair
 Councilor Dale R. Sprague
 Councilor Richard Michaud
 Councilor Martin Pepin, Temporary Appointment

Administration/Staff present: Bob Belmore, City Manager
 Trish Harris, City Clerk
 Shanna Saunders, Dir. of Planning & Community Dev.

Others Present: Steve Whitman, Resilience Planning and Design
Consultants Richard Brooks, Resident

Chairman Dumont called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion made by Councilor Michaud, seconded by Councilor Pepin, made a motion to accept the minutes of the previous meeting as presented, Motion passed 4-0.

RESILIENCE PLANNING – FORM BASED CODES

Steve Whitman directed attention to the drafts included in the meeting packet. He stated there were some questions that he hoped the Committee could provide further guidance in finalizing.

He stated that they have finished reviewing the visual preference survey; there was a great return rate. They were looking for a standard and guidance from the survey. In reviewing the surveys, they found that there wasn't enough of a difference between the 2 districts along Market Street, so they merged the 2 areas into one. There are now 5 districts.

He explained that these are still drafts and they can continue to make changes. The Committee reviewed each of the Areas.

Area 1, Mr. Whitman reviewed the different sections in the document; Statement of Purpose, Permitted Uses, Dimensional Regulations, etc. Mr. Whitman asked the Committee their opinion on front setbacks. Should the setback be the average setback as other lots along the same side of that street or at the back of the sidewalk. There was discussion on setback lines.

Committee consensus is to have the front setbacks at the sidewalk.

Mr. Whitman said the other question is the height of the buildings in Area 1. After brief discussion the ***Committee consensus was to have a 2-story minimum and no maximum.***

The back side of the document for Area 1 shows the Architectural Standards, Streetscape Standards and other Standards. Mr. Whitman pointed out the proposed conditional use provision on bottom of the page, stating this provided some flexibility to go to the planning board and receive approval as long as standards meet the intent of the Ordinance.

In Area 2, High Street, Mr. Whitman said the intent is to keep the mix. A 25' minimum front setback is suggested, based on what is out there now.

In Area 3, Plaza Area, a 2-story minimum and build to lines is the recommendation. Mr. Whitman stated that the question he had regarding this Area is whether the Committee wanted to place a restriction for non-residential only on the first floor.

Councilor Sprague stated that he likes non-residential on the first floor on all lots in this area. He wants to see more retail and office space.

Mr. Whitman asked if they want the non-residential requirement on other off streets in Area 3.

Director Saunders said they have had ZBA cases of commercial in front and residential behind, on the first floor.

After discussion, ***Committee consensus was to have non-residential on the first floor from Main Street to Constitutional. Constitutional up to High Street can be residential on first floor.***

Councilor Sprague said we are lucky to have this blank canvas and wants things there that will make people want to go to the downtown area.

Councilor Dumont stated that once the residential units are filled, that will bring businesses. Councilor Pepin stated that we need to bring people in to support the businesses.

Mr. Whitman stated that the other thing he needs the Committee to review is the use of the word 'shall' in Architectural Standards on the back side of the document for Area 3. He stated the word 'should' was used in other Areas; however, he sees the need for 'shall' in Area 3. ***Committee Consensus was to use the word 'shall'.***

Mr. Whitman said Area 4 has a 2-story minimum and no maximum. There was brief discussion.

Area 5, Residential Sub-District, is the mill area, with a 4-story min.

Committee Consensus is for Resilience Planning and Design Consultants to finalize the plans and present it to full Council at the November 18, 2019 meeting.

CH. 31- COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION TAX RELIEF INCENTIVE PROGRAM - SOMEDOWNTOWN LLC, MR. DAVID BAKER FOR 8 GOVERNMENT WAY

The Committee reviewed the application. Mr. Baker is requesting 7- years of property tax relief. The first floor will be commercial, and the second floor 3 residential units.

Councilor Sprague, seconded by Councilor Pepin, made a motion to send the application to full Council. Motion passed 4-0.

The Committee did not provide a recommendation; however, they did not want to hold up the process in getting it to the full Council.

SOMERSWORTH PLAZA RFP UPDATE

City Manager Belmore stated that since they have been working on Form Based Codes, the Somersworth Plaza project has been set aside as well as a timing issue to get it to the proper developers for inclusion into their development plans. He explained that there is an informational meeting set up for November, with a due date for proposals in mid-January.

Councilor Pepin, seconded by Councilor Michaud, made a motion to have City Manager work with staff to issue the RFP for the Somersworth Plaza development. Motion passed, 4-0.

MISCELLANEOUS

City Manager Belmore distributed a Memo from Director Saunders outlining what Council has done to date, regarding the Chapter 31 Ordinance, Community Revitalization Program approvals. There have been 7 approved applications, and now 1 pending application.

There was discussion about various applications and projects.

The Somersworth Hotel project at 67 Elm Street has stopped due to structural damage, the owner developers' application had been granted.

City Manager Belmore said he will update the memo and send it on to full Council.

City Manager Belmore said in 2000, the City got a bond in the amount of \$475,000 to redo the Somersworth Plaza façade. They spent approximately \$650,000 when you include interest. The City owns the facade and controls its maintenance, repairs and insurance; the City also approves any signage placed on it by the business condo owners. Stripe Nine wants to deviate from the standard used since the façade rehab. City Manager Belmore stated he had discussed the need to review the standards with Mayor Hilliard and he agreed that the EDC would be the proper Committee to address this issue. Belmore suggested perhaps working on standards other than the green lettering, to reinvigorate the signage. He showed the proposed signage being requested by the new tenant, Stripe Nine Brewery.

Consensus of the Committee was to discuss this issue further at a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilor Pepin seconded by Councilor Michaud to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 pm. Motion passed 3-1; Councilor Sprague voting no

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Harris, City Clerk