

MINUTES

Members Present: Chair S. Ferrigno, A. Raggi, B. Okeson, C. Chukwuogor, L. Watson

Member Absent: D. Fecho

Ex-Officio Member Present: A. Moran

Ex-Officio Member Absent: B. Shaiken

Staff Present: L. Painter, Director of Planning and Development, and M. Ollennu, Administrative Assistant - Mansfield Downtown Partnership

Staff Absent: C. van Zelm, Executive Director, Mansfield Downtown Partnership

Guests: R. Aylesworth (Town Manager)

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Ferrigno called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and welcomed Anthony Raggi the newest member of the Economic Development Commission. Members and staff introduced themselves to Raggi.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Okeson MOVED, Chukwuogor SECONDED, to approve the April 15, 2021 regular meeting Minutes as presented. Motion PASSED unanimously.

Watson MOVED, Okeson SECONDED, to approve the May 20, 2021 regular meeting Minutes. Chair Ferrigno noted an abstention from Chukwuogor who was not present at the May 20, 2021 meeting.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS AT MEETING

A. Review of Development Criteria

Chair Ferrigno opened discussion on the Economic Development Commission's criteria for project endorsement and welcomed member comments on edits and or additions to the 2018 project endorsement criteria.

Chukwuogor asked for clarification and meaning of wordings such as Mansfield's grand list, consistency with rural nature, consistency with type of businesses preferred by other businesses and residents in town, Mansfield Tomorrow's goals and how they relate to economic development.

Chukwuogor suggested the Economic Development Commission should focus on business development and retention and support for small businesses. Chair Ferrigno commented on the grand list being the total of taxable properties in Mansfield; he also suggested that the specific wording for “consistent with rural nature” can be reworded or taken out completely because of its subjective meaning. Painter shared with members some goals identified in the Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development for economic development such as creating an entrepreneurial environment that supports business growth, agriculture’s value to the community, supporting business expansion whilst keeping community character, amongst others.

Chukwuogor suggested that some aspects of the criteria can be appropriately handled by committees such as the Planning and Zoning Commission and asked that the Economic Development Commission tailor the criteria to align with quantifiable goals such as employment, increasing revenue, encouraging synergistic networking opportunities, and entrepreneurial development. Watson recommended that “criteria” be changed to guidelines and supported Chukwuogor’s suggestion to strike out wordings like rural nature and a project’s consistency to preexisting businesses.

Watson proposed that the criteria/ guidelines could be studied for further edits, omissions and/or additions by the Governance and Bylaws subcommittee. Members agreed to table the discussion pending a critical look from the Governance and Bylaws subcommittee.

B. Follow up on Haven Campus Community Proposal

Chair Ferrigno asked for member comments on sending a letter of support to the Planning and Zoning Commission for the Haven Campus Community proposal. Moran suggested that an earlier endorsement will go a long way considering recent activities at the Four Corners. Watson MOVED, Chukwuogor SECONDED the motion to have Chair Ferrigno send a letter to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Motion PASSED unanimously. The public hearing for the Haven Campus Communities proposal is scheduled for August 30, 2021.

C. Transitioning to In- Person Meetings

Chair Ferrigno invited suggestions on a transition plan for in- person meetings. Chukwuogor requested that based on the increase cases of the new Covid Delta variant in Connecticut, plans for in-person meetings be considered around early fall. Members agreed to table the discussion to the next meeting. Aylesworth informed members that the Town has invested in a variety of new hardware and software to allow a blend of hybrid participation for meetings by August 2021.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Member Updates- New EDC Members

Chair Ferrigno encouraged members to recommend individuals who will be valuable additions to the Economic Development Commission.

B. Staff Updates/Housing updates

Painter informed members of the Planning and Zoning Commission’s recent approval of a special permit for Agbotic Smart Farm, the approval of amendments to zoning regulations to allow town houses in certain situations to be up to four stories in height, and the approval of a temporary unlimited nine month moratorium on cannabis establishments in anticipation of the legislation that went into effect on June 30, 2021. The Planning and Zoning Commission will work with the Town Council, Agriculture

Committee, the Economic Development Commission and the Town University Relations Committee to develop regulations related to those establishments with discussion commencing on August 7, 2021

Painter also updated the EDC on the continued public hearing for Haven Campus Communities to August 30, 2021 and Glisten Diamonds, a research and development startup company with links to UConn that will conduct research on non-stick coating for precious minerals. Public hearing is scheduled to continue for the start up on Thursday July 29, 2021 pending written comments from Windham Water Works because of the labs proximity to the Windham public water shed reservoir.

Members were also informed of a public hearing on July 29, 2021 for a special permit approval on proposed changes to zoning regulations related to establishing criteria for drive thru and authorizing drive thru associated with restaurants in Zone 1 business district via special permit. Painter encouraged members to visit the Story Map link via the Town's website for this proposed project and many others.

An update was given on Capstone/J.E Shepard's official withdrawal from the anticipated multifamily housing development in the Four Corners owing to the approval of the purchase of the land parcels by UConn's Board of Trustees. UConn had raised some concerns on the multifamily development because of the project's proximity to the vernal pool and their suggested future inability to further develop the Tech Park.

Mayor Moran and Aylesworth commented on plans by the Town to address UConn's purchase of the land that will in effect curtail tax revenues the Town would have benefited from if the development had proceeded. Watson asked about the composition of the Town/ University Relations Committee and Chukwuogor suggested that to prevent future issues the Town's attorney should look at ongoing and forthcoming agreements with UConn.

Painter updated members on Brown's Road designation as a scenic road on Tuesday July 13, 2021 and also informed members that any alteration will have to be approved by the Town Council based on alternative analysis. Alteration that might require a permit include paving, pedestrian walkways, grading and drainage that will be sponsored by the Town. The road is mile long from Mansfield City Road to Chatham Drive. Also shared was the Town Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission's adoption of the affordable housing plan for the Town.

C. Business Updates (Closings/Opening)

Members were informed on the change on Spring Hill Café's signage to Stix and Stones. Further details will be shared at the next regular meeting.

E. EDC Calendar

There was no discussion on the calendar.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

All noted.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

A. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Next regular meeting is scheduled for August 19, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

B. Future Meeting Topics

Ferrigno will meet with staff to discuss future topics.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:05 pm

Respectfully submitted by:
Mary Ahima Ollennu
Administrative Assistant