

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
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Vice Chairman
Tracy Edwards
Secretary
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MINUTES

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2010 ERLINGHAUSER ROOM 7:00 PM

The Economic Development Commission held a regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 5, 2010. The meeting began at 7:05 P.M.

Roll call:

Patrick Henri	present
Sandro Epifano	present
James Hooker	present
William Luneski	present
William Gallant	present
Greg Seccombe	present
Tracy Edwards	absent
Terry Goldson	present
Ralphine Siggers Ford	absent

7 present, 2 absent
A quorum was present.

Also present:

John Marini, Alderman
Claude Perry, Executive Director, Economic Development

Mr. Epifano declared the meeting open at 7:05. The meeting began with the pledge of allegiance to the flag. He then introduced the newest member of the board, Mr. Patrick Henri.

Mr. Perry stated that some of the consultants for the boards were present and he suggested that the board members introduce themselves. Mr. Epifano then requested that Mr. Seccombe be the official time keeper.

Mr. Epifano then opened the meeting up to the public. There was no one that wished to speak. He then closed the meeting to the public.

Mr. Epifano then looked at approving the previous meeting minutes. He stated that the minutes would not be able to be approved because they were not corrected. The Secretary stated that she corrected the July

minutes, and submitted them to the board. She was waiting for the corrections from Mr. Prestiano for the other minutes. The August minutes were the ones that she is waiting for the corrections for. She then indicated that the September minutes have not been addressed as of yet. Mr. Henri questioned the acronym TIF. He was told that it stands for “tax increment financing”. The Secretary was told that they would approve the minutes at the November meeting.

Mr. Epifano then moved on to correspondence. He asked specifically about the letter regarding the Ansonia High School Students and bringing them in to do a survey. Mr. Henri stated that he felt that it was a good idea to get input from other groups such as this. Mr. Goldson suggested that the board involve the Middle School students. Mr. Epifano thought that the High School students could possibly add this experience to their resumes. Mr. Luneski suggested that we involve the Emmett O’Brien students as well. Assumption school should also be included. Mr. Epifano stated that he believed that his next step would be to approach the Board of Education and see what steps he needs to take. He was told that he should contact the Superintendent and the principals of the schools before he goes to the Board of Education. He was then told that Junior Achievement goes into some schools and presents a program for students. Mead School and Assumption has the Junior Achievement program at the present time.

Mr. Perry stated that they did receive a letter of resignation from Mr. Prestiano which had already been accepted by the Board of Aldermen. He then stated that under new business, there will be the election of a new chairman for the board.

Mr. Epifano asked if anyone had anything to report under committee reports. He stated that the survey done on Cheshire was done by the Connecticut Economic Resource Center and they were paid for their services.

He then jumped to the TIF program. He explained that what it does is offers any business that comes into town a tax break. In Seymour it’s an 80% reduction on property taxes for the first year, up to 25% reduction in state Connecticut corporate taxes for years and up to \$75,000 in employee training grant funds. This is just an example of what is being done in a neighboring town. Mr. Henri asked if that came out of their tax money, or did they get something from the state to supplement that. Mr. Perry stated was that this was basically state money. Mr. Perry further explained that he and Mr. Epifano have been discussing this and the tax increment financing, which is used for big projects. The city has to agree to forgo some income now, in order to get future income tax income for the properties. He further explained that this is not a traditional tax incentive in the way we normally think of one. He explained that a non-profit, would not benefit from this due to the fact that they don’t pay taxes. Mr. Epifano then explained that if the city were to give a TIF to a business, there would be a caveat for example that they would have to hire residents from the city to work at their business. Mr. Luneski asked if there were any time limits. He was told this is something that would need to be negotiated. Mr. Epifano then suggested that the board do something with the survey and the TIF program so that they could move it from the agenda and take a roll call vote on the two issues. He further explained that he didn’t understand why the survey that the board was looking at was from Cheshire. He was told that it was an example of what could be used, and use it as a starting point

to help us to create our own survey. Mr. Gallant asked if there was a consensus as to what Ansonia is looking for and what Ansonia is. Mr. Marini suggested that the commission should go through the survey and see if there are any questions that the board should have in their survey for Ansonia. Mr. Epifano again stated that he would like to have the secretary do a roll call vote regarding these two items and have them removed from the agenda. The Secretary asked if that was a motion. She was told that it was. Mr. Marini stated that a motion cannot come from the chairman. The Chairman can entertain a motion that would have to come from the floor. Mr. Goldson made a motion to continue to look at the survey and to also review and adapt it for our needs in Ansonia. The motion was seconded by Mr. Luneski. All were in favor of the motion.

Mr. Luneski suggested that the board form a committee to be able to review and adapt the survey. The committee will consist of Mr. Henri, Mr. Luneski and Mr. Seccombe. Mr. Epifano would like to have the committee submit a draft by the next meeting for the members to evaluate.

Mr. Hooker made a motion to explore the TIF program by forming a committee to gather information and see if this would be something that the City could do. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gallant. All were in favor of the motion. The committee will be Mr. Luneski, and Mr. Hooker and Mr. Perry. The board will be using this as a marketing committee.

Mr. Marini then spoke to the commission regarding the web site. He and Mr. Perry met with Rick Bshara and Eileen Krugel. They discussed the web site and the fact that there is a cost associated to keeping the website up to date. Mr. Goldson suggested that we look at other areas and their websites and see what we like and what we can use. Mr. Gallant stated that he feels that we do not have a choice, no matter what the cost. Some of the parts of the parts of the web site are already up. The question is what should we link to and what should we host? Hosting information is costly and takes time to maintain. Mr. Gallant feels that the board members should look at the site and give feedback on what they may want to add or eliminate from the site. He also suggested that questions regarding the website should be included in the survey.

Mr. Seccombe suggested that a marketing packet be developed that would allow a business to easily find the information that they would need to move into the town. Mr. Marini stated that much of the information that we are discussing is already available in City Hall. It is just a matter of packaging and presentation. We need to take this information and turn it into a tool that will let us market the city. Mr. Luneski asked that we have all of this information, but what are we doing to market ourselves? How far are we marketing ourselves? Are we just reaching out to the state, to the nation and or to international interests? How do we get the word out there that Ansonia exists? Should we attend trade shows? Should we publish this in trade magazines, etc.? We need to market the city. Mr. Gallant stated that he would like to find out why there were other businesses that did not move here. Mr. Henri stated that he heard that the railroad station would be removing its depot from Ansonia. He was told that it didn't seem feasible.

Mr. Luneski made a motion to keep the issue regarding the web site on the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Henri. All were in favor of the motion.

Mr. Seccombe stated that we need to clean up the city and make it look better to people that maybe interested in moving into town. He further explained that it seems that the blight officer is not doing his job. He was told that there is a new blight officer and he is making a record number of citations regarding blight. He is doing his job correctly. He doesn't have the sole authority to give out municipal tickets or fines. He has to go through a process with others first. It is possible that this is something that can be done in the future, but there are so many things that need to be taken care of first.

Mr. Perry spoke for a moment regarding the Small Cities Grant. He introduced Dr. Lisa Low and her associate and requested that they inform the board of what has been going on.

Dr. Low thanked Mr. Perry for inviting her and her associate to speak before the board. She introduced Adam Kinkle. He is responsible for overseeing Construction management in everything that they do. The application was for housing rehab. She stated that there are a number of blighted homes in the area. They will be able to do approximately 10 homes. They will be sending out applications, posting flyers and doing a press release. Many people are already aware of the program already. There is a waiting list already from the 1990's. Some of the applicants have passed on waiting for the program. DECD is the agency that is doing this. It is a two year program. We are hoping that in 6 months we could take care of 10 homes. If we are able to do this, we can get in on the next round and get more money and complete more projects. There are about 50 properties and 95 units that have already applied. Mr. Gallant asked if these are residential properties? He was told that they were. He then asked if they would be limited to the contractors? He further asked if they were union required or non-union? Mr. Perry stated that it would be the lowest qualified bidder on the property that would be used. In the past, if you wanted a particular contractor, they have made exceptions to this and the home owner would pay the difference. We just have that approved by the DECD. The board was told that there is a strong emphasis in utilizing local workers for the projects. They are going to make sure that the workers are based out of Ansonia. In regards to the union question, they are not required to be unionized. They added that there is no rate work for this either. The board was told that the projects are not large enough for it. Mr. Epifano asked if they worked with apprentice programs? He was told that they do not. They said that they are going to use Ansonia based contractors as well as those in neighboring towns. A discussion developed regarding this concept. They are going to try and see what they can try to do this. They were then asked how a specific property is selected for rehab. The board was informed that first the applicant must formerly apply and then it is based on a first come, first serve basis. Subsequently, it is based on the HUD income limits. Once those two criteria are met, the panel will do a site inspection and assess everything from energy efficiency, façade, blight, electrical and plumbing. The contractors bid on as many properties that they would like to bid on. The contractor with the lowest qualified bid per project is usually awarded the project. The question was asked if we could apply for more grant monies. The board was told that if things go well and there is a close out, the city can be approved for additional funding. The plan is to have an accelerated program so that more projects can be completed in a particular time frame. Mr. Epifano thanked Dr. Low for her time and presentation.

Mr. Epifano then turned the meeting over to Mr. Perry for the election of a new chairman to replace Mr.

Prestiano. Mr. Perry entertained a motion for Chairman. Mr. Hooker nominated Mr. Epifano for Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Goldson. Mr. Seccombe nominated Mr. Henri for Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Luneski. A paper ballot was taken and the vote was 4 votes for Mr. Henri, 3 votes for Mr. Epifano.

Mr. Henri stated that the next scheduled meeting was for Election Day. He made a motion that the meeting be changed to Monday November 1st at 6:30. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gallant. All were in favor of the motion.

A discussion regarding the possibilities of having a joint meeting with representatives from Main Street Development Corporation and Ansonia Development Corporation arose. Mr. Goldson made a motion to have a joint meeting with Main Street Development and Ansonia Development Corporation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Epifano. All were in favor of the motion.

Mr. Henri requested that all of the members of the Board make every effort to attend the next meeting.

Mr. Marini stated that the Film commission took pictures of all of the businesses that they looked at and posted them to their site for possible locations for future films. Some of the businesses that they toured were the Armory, Ansonia Copper & Brass and the Nature Center.

There was no other business to come before the board at this time.

Mr. Gallant made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Henri. All were in favor of the motion.

The meeting ended at 8:50.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Sardinha
Secretary