

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES
JULY 9, 2009**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Sayre, Chair; Bernard Apter, G. Jeffrey Keith,
Thomas Deffenbaugh, Ex Officio Sue O'Connor

ALSO PRESENT: Tana Parseliti, Downtown Manager; Mark Pellegrini, Director of
Neighborhood Services

Adoption of Minutes of May 14, 2009

Mr. Apter moved to approve the minutes as written, Mr. Keith seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Presentation of Broad Street and Main Street Parking Lot Redevelopment Concept Plans

Mr. Pellegrini reviewed the status of the plans being developed for the Broad Street Redevelopment area and for the Main Street parking lot at the corner of Main and Forest Streets.

Mr. Pellegrini reviewed the vision, design principles and some concept sketches for the proposed mixed-use development scenario envisioned for Broad St.. Mr. Pellegrini said the Agency has become convinced that adding a significant retail component of several hundred thousand square feet is no longer realistic in the Broad Street location, and that it is doubtful any single user will be able to acquire and redevelop the amount of real estate available in the district. Instead, the agency is considering a mixed-use plan which would include a significant residential component of perhaps 400-500 residential units, some civic uses and entertainment district, mixed-uses which would include commercial with residences above and mixed commercial districts that would include a variety of retail, service, and office uses. Mr. Pellegrini reviewed the proposed land use plan and the design sketches developed during the charrettes conducted by the Agency earlier this year. The reconstruction of Broad Street is also included as part of the Agency's plan for the area. The EDC members present were generally supportive of the concepts being developed by the Redevelopment Agency.

Regarding the downtown parking lot, Mr. Pellegrini said the Agency is focusing on developing a request for proposals and soliciting the engagement of a preferred developer as opposed to a formal redevelopment plan. The Agency is taking this approach because the Town already owns the parking lot, and because it is necessary to come to a working arrangement with the abutting property owner who must approve any changes to the use of the parking lot. The Agency believes negotiating with the owner and soliciting proposals for the development of both properties is the most efficient approach.

Mr. Pellegrini reviewed the schedule for both the redevelopment plan and the Main Street proposal and said the Agency will be entering the public information and public hearing stages in

August and September. Mr. Sayre noted the proposed redevelopment plan was presented at the June 23 economic summit and was generally supported by those in attendance.

Update of Economic Working Group Reports

Mr. Pellegrini briefly reviewed the recommendations from the three economic working groups developing proposals based on ideas generated at the December 2008 economic strategic planning retreat. The workforce development working group settled on a proposal to create a web site that would allow job seekers to post their resumes for viewing by prospective employers and for prospective employers to post their job openings. The committee recommends that a group work with the Town's planning department, the Chamber of Commerce, business representatives, and the Town's information system department to develop such a site.

The small business assistance working group had three recommendations. First was the creation of a "virtual" permitting office. The idea is that a web site would be able to provide people interested in opening or locating a business in Manchester with advice on what permits they would need and the sequence through which they need to proceed to obtain local permits. Town departments that would be involved would include building, planning, health, fire, and assessor's office. This group would also need to work with representatives of the Town's information systems department, planning department, the effected departments, and a focus group of business people to develop the content as well as the operation and functionality of the site.

The second recommendation was to pursue development of a small business resource center in Manchester to be jointly developed by the Town and Manchester Community College. The goal is to create an assistance center in Manchester that could provide a range of advice and references to people starting up a business. Such topics as labor laws, financing, writing business plans, develop marketing plans and other entrepreneurial or small business skills could be offered or coordinated through such a center.

Finally, the small business group advocated that the Town hire an economic development coordinator/business recruitment position to dedicate resources exclusively for economic development and small business assistance activities.

The marketing and branding group recommended the Town engage a consultant to develop a marketing and a communications plan. The group identified the assets available in Manchester as well as a description of Manchester's personality as a starting point for the development of such a marketing plan. Funding would be necessary for this recommendation. The group also recommended forming a brand advisory committee to ensure a branding and marketing campaign is completed and executed by all responsible parties, and they recommended that someone inside the Town administration be identified as responsible for the marketing plan.

There was some general discussion about these recommendations as well as the role of the EDC relative to both the redevelopment plan and the economic development working groups. It was suggested the Commission could offer to act as the coordinator and monitor of the various working groups to ensure that progress is made, or to serve in an advisory capacity to those groups. Commission members noted that between the small working groups that were formed and the redevelopment plan that they now seem to have a limited role and are not certain how the

Commission fits into the other activities. or whether the Commission should reexamine its charge and determine its own work program. Chairman Sayre requested that Mr. Pellegrini forward the Town ordinance creating the Commission to all members and provide the previous work ideas developed by the Commission as part of a discussion on the EDC's future work program.

Report of the Special Service District

Ms. Parseliti said that the SSD is working with Manchester Community College on several initiatives. Examples include arranging for student art installations in downtown stores, arranging for a venue for an open mike night available to MCC students; encouraging student-run businesses either in association with an open mike or the sale of MCC merchandise, and other initiatives that would make downtown a destination for MCC students.

Report of the Chamber of Commerce

Ms. O'Connor said that recently the question of who is responsible for maintaining private fire hydrants, that is those which are owned by commercial property owners or certain types of residential complexes, that are not technically part of the Town's public water supply system. She said the Chamber is arranging a meeting with appropriate Town officials to explain the responsibilities of both the private and public parties.