

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES
MAY 14, 2009**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Sayre, Chair; Bernard Apter, G. Jeffrey Keith, Barry Cyr, Margaret Jacobson, Thomas Deffenbaugh, Joy Dorin

ALSO PRESENT: Tana Parseliti, Downtown Manager
Mark Pellegrini, Director of Neighborhood Services
and Economic Development

Adoption of Minutes from April 19, 2009 Meeting

Ms. Jacobson moved to approve the minutes as written. Ms. Dorin seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Discussion of the Planning Department Housing Data and Analysis Information

Mr. Pellegrini reminded the Commission they had heard a report on housing demographics by planning department staff at the last meeting. The presentation took up the entire meeting and the Commission decided to postpone a discussion on the information until now.

Ms. Jacobson said what she found most interesting was that multi-family housing does "work" in many areas of Town and that many of the larger multi-family developments more than pay for themselves. Mr. Sayre agreed and pointed out the tax revenue generated by many of these projects outweighs the cost of educating the associated students in Manchester public schools.

Mr. Apter noted the median price for Manchester homes fell 10% from their peak. He asked how that compared to other regions of the country. Mr. Anderson responded the 10% decrease was similar to that of Connecticut as a whole, but the housing crisis in Connecticut had not affected value as much as it has other regions of the country, especially Florida, the Southwest and California.

Ms. Jacobson said it was good to see that Manchester is in line with the other comparable towns. She said it would be interesting to look at trend data of owner occupancy rates for duplexes.

Mr. Cyr said he has noticed a problem with some lower cost condominium complexes. He said because the percentage of owner occupied units is so low, it is difficult for potential buyers to get financing. Owners who would sell to potential owner occupants now have to rent those units. He said he believes this is contributing to deteriorating conditions at certain complexes. It was noted this is a particular problem in conversions, where rental complexes were converted to condominium ownership.

Ms. Jacobson asked staff if there were lessons they learned in doing the research for the demographic report. Mr. Pellegrini said the fact that all multi-family developments are not the same stood out. The question now is how the Town can start looking at distinct markets and neighborhoods and manage to keep all of them healthy. He also said the percentage of

residential owners in neighborhoods with many duplexes was likely higher now because of the high degree of sub prime lending between 1997 and 2002.

Mr. Cyr said in order to increase owner-occupancy in Manchester's older neighborhoods safety was a main consideration. He suggested adding additional police substations in those areas.

Mr. Pellegrini told the Commission there was stimulus money available for foreclosure prevention. The first round of such funding was divided by the state to the largest cities including Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury and New Haven. He said there was talk of municipalities applying jointly because towns like Manchester would not qualify on their own.

In response to a question from Mr. Keith, Ms. Bertotti explained that build-out projections contained in the demographic report were for maximum build-out and multiplied the available acreage by the maximum number of units which would be permitted there. Almost all of the remaining undeveloped land in Town is designated and zoned for single-family detached homes. Ms. Bertotti noted that even if this maximum build-out were to occur, the ratio of owner to renter occupied housing would only shift by one or two percentage points.

Report of the Planning Director

Mr. Pellegrini told the Commission that the Board of Directors will be holding an economic summit on June 23 at Manchester Community College. He reported there will be speakers on current economic trends in Town and in the region and that the Marketing and Branding, Small Business Assistance and Workforce Development subcommittees will present reports as well.

The Redevelopment Agency is moving toward drafting a full redevelopment plan. Through a design charrette process the Agency has created a proposed land use plan and, with the help of students from the University of Hartford has generated several 3-D concept models for the area. As for downtown, the focus is on the Forest Street lot. The Agency recently received funding approval from the Board of Directors for appraisals of the Broad Street and downtown properties as well as for a market study for certain uses downtown. Mr. Pellegrini said the Agency would be meeting with the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Board of Directors, and property owners in the near future to update them on the progress in preparation for the presentation of a draft plan.

Report of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

In the absence of the Chamber of Commerce president, no report was given.

Report of the Special Services District

In the absence of the downtown manager no report was given.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

The next meeting of the Manchester Redevelopment Commission will take place on Thursday, June 11 at 8:00 a.m. in the Lincoln Center Director's Room.