

Town of Smithfield

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

May 29, 2018

MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Joe Nero, Louis Fabrizio, Stefanie Howell and Kenneth Sousa
ABSENT: Lynda Lisker (excused)
OTHERS: Town Planner, Michael Phillips

Chairman Joe Nero opened the May 29, 2018 meeting of the Smithfield Economic Development Commission at 6:37 p.m. The Commission welcomed new member Louis Fabrizio.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION AND HEALTH NOTIFICATION

Chairman Joe Nero gave emergency evacuation and health notification.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – April 24, 2018

Ken Sousa made a motion, seconded by Stefanie Howell, to approve the minutes from the April 24th meeting. The vote on the motion was all in favor except for Louis Fabrizio who abstained and the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Presentation by Britt Page, The Best of RI Program –

This agenda item was tabled until the June meeting when a new Director is appointed.

Ken Sousa made a motion, seconded by Stefanie Howell, to table The Best of RI Program presentation until the next meeting in June. The vote on the motion was all in favor and the motion carried.

- Discuss Economic Development Growth Overlay (EGO) District –

The Commission discussed the Economic Development Growth Overlay. Town Planner, Mike Phillips stated that there was not a lot which happened since the last meeting, but he did receive some information back from the engineering firm about the sewers and what it would take to

update them. He stated that they would need to work the numbers, but we now know what the solution is. There are a couple other projects that would be connected into the pz zone, one of which is before the Planning Board currently. The owners will probably ask for a zoning change as the property abuts the edge of the overlay at the corner of Route 116 and John Mowry Road. Mr. Phillips stated that he would discuss this further at the next meeting. He advised that a Special Assessment or a Special Sewer Impact Fee based on the perimeters may be needed to allow the projects to go forward, but a better cost estimate would be needed before a fee could be assessed for people to join that system. Mike Phillips stated that if the property owner does not want to expand or tie into the system that owner would not have to pay it. Each property owner pays for their own tie in. Mike Phillips advised that it would upgrading a section of pipe that already exists. It is a fixed cost to update the line, but only new people who would like to tie in would be assessed to do so, but added that it is purely theoretical at this point

Mike Phillips advised that the water and sewer lines go in a separate course. He explained that water pressure would be a separate issue and that the storage capacity, distribution lines, pipe swaps in North Providence would need to be completed to increase the pressure.

Ken Sousa asked Mike Phillips to provide a map of the properties affected by the overlay and he advised that he would.

Joe Nero stated that if the State passes the legislation regarding the tax increment financing (TIF) it would help with financing.

The Commission discussed a memo that was sent on behalf of the Economic Development Commission advising it is the EDC's opinion that the formation of a redevelopment agency is not recommended unless the pending legislation regarding tax increment financing (TIF) is not enacted by the state legislature, then it may need to be reconsidered.

Ken Sousa referred to, "that is not recommended" which was used in the memo stating that they are very strong words. He advised that he was under the impression that the memo was going to the Town's Solicitor and not to the Town Council until the Commission had better facts. Mr. Sousa advised that the letter does not match the paragraph in the minutes and he feels that there is a disjoint between the minutes and the letter. He respectfully disagrees that the letter was sent and points out that there were no votes taken regarding this. Joe Nero stated it was the consensus of the Commission and though it may not have been a formal vote, it was imperative to give feedback to the Town Council.

After discussion, it was agreed that in the future, the Commission would take a vote and that any memos or letters should initially be a draft to be reviewed by the Commission prior to being sent. Mr. Nero offered to send a corrected memo to the Town Council, but it was agreed to await the state legislature's decision regarding the TIF before any additional correspondence is done. Joe Nero stated that he would send a letter to Town Solicitor's for her opinion.

The Commission discussed other financing options such as Bonds and an Infrastructure Bank. They discussed the idea to sell, lease or keep the overlay.

Joe Nero suggested that a few companies could sponsor a data analytics center. Mike Phillips advised that he had started an RFP which could be tailored. The town could propose a data analytics incubator RFP, but it would need to be coordinated with Commerce RI. Mr. Phillips stated that the infrastructure capacity issues would need to be addressed. The Commission discussed the potential of an RFP and infrastructure costs. Mike Phillips advised that he would put together a draft for the next meeting.

- Discuss EDC Business Community Outreach –

The Commission discussed different ideas for a Community Outreach Program with a potential of an annual, monthly or quarterly event to support and help businesses in town be more competitive such as to hold an annual trade show or business expo event offering local businesses first priority. Stefanie Howell stated that Bryant University and Twin River have held similar events and Ken Sousa added that the Rotary Club has held a Taste of Smithfield event. It was agreed that the community outreach would continue to be ongoing.

Mike Phillips stated representatives from several departments met with Diane Pesaturo from Exceeda regarding streamlining the Town's business licenses and business registrations online. He advised that the license and business registration will be primarily handled in the Town Clerk's Office.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Discuss Event Planning –

The Commission discussed different event planning ideas such as holding a World Trade Day. Ken souse suggested an eat and go event in which restaurants in town could pair with High School events such as a theatre presentation. Restaurants could have a preset menu for patrons who purchased tickets and the proceeds could go to the High School. It would help the hospitality business in town and would be a great way to get High School kids involved.

- Discuss Webpage -

Stefanie Howell stated that contracts, files etc. could be stored in google docs. Mike Phillips will discuss this with IT Director, Bill Pilkington. Ken Sousa stated that a context based management program could be developed so businesses could check events to participate in. Stefanie stated that programs could also be listed on Facebook or Linkedin.

Stefanie Howell made a motion, seconded by Louis Fabrizio, to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. The vote on the motion was all in favor and the motion carried.

The next meeting is scheduled for **June 26, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon M. Gilmore
Recording Secretary