



CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Minutes March 18th, 2021

Held through Zoom Virtual Meeting Conference Session

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Botelho at 7:03 pm. Those identified present in open session were Chairwoman Botelho, Mr. Radway, Mr. Killian, Mr. Corria, Mr. Leonardo, Mr. Brun, Mr. Lis, Mr. Moran (staff) and Mr. DeCosta, legal staff. Also in attendance was Laura McNamara from the East Providence Area Chamber of Commerce.

Chairwoman Botelho thanked Mr. Moran and Vice Chairman Leonardo for their efforts in working with the Mayor's office and his recently held online economic development forum on March 4th. She said that she was a participant in the forum discussion and said that Mr. Leonardo worked on putting together PowerPoint presentation slides that were used at the forum discussion and wanted to extend her thanks.

II. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of November 19, 2020

Chairwoman Botelho noted that there seems to be language from a prior meeting after the adjournment notice in the draft that need to be removed. Mr. Moran said that he would remove this language.

On a Motion by Mr. Leonardo and Seconded by Mr. Radway, the Commission unanimously voted to approve the minutes of November 19, 2020 with the noted revision.

B. Minutes of December 17, 2020

On a Motion by Mr. Leonardo and Seconded by Mr. Radway, the Commission unanimously voted to approve the minutes of December 17, 2020.

III. New Business

A. City Council Ward 3 Perspective – Councilman Nathan Cahoon

Chairwoman Botelho welcomed Councilman Nate Cahoon to the meeting. Councilman Cahoon thanked the Commission for allowing him to speak to the Commission.

Councilman Cahoon discussed the business survey the City Council has prepared, with a variety of questions that will be sent out in the next series of water bills. He said that he was hoping that the Council or at the very least, he, would be able to have more dialogue with the Commission as it relates to discussing the interests of the business community in East Providence.

Chairwoman Botelho said that the Commission is currently reviewing its duties through a self-assessment survey that was completed internally. She said that she would rather see feedback to the Council from the Commission as a result of direct inquiries from the Council rather than the commission unilaterally sending its recommendations to the City without the Council first requesting this information from the Commission. Councilman Cahoon acknowledged this as a sensible approach on economic related issues, particularly as it relates to controversial issues.

The City Council business survey was discussed in more detail between Councilman Cahoon and the Commission and what the survey would hopefully accomplish, with the results providing valuable feedback on what is needed to help the business community including loans and other business assistance programs and initiatives.

Councilman Cahoon discussed the Comprehensive Plan that is currently being prepared and his expectations of what the new Comprehensive Plan will accomplish for the City in the future including zoning reforms and changes that would make it easier for the business community to thrive in the City.

Chairwoman Botelho said that she wanted to make sure that whatever feedback on issues affecting economic development are provided from the Commission it should be a consensus among the entire Commission. Individuals may have their own opinions about certain issues or projects, but these could perhaps be conveyed to the Council from individual members of the Commission at project hearings.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, Laura McNamara discussed her experience in working with surveys and what has tended to work for her in the past. She said she could post the Council survey in her newsletter and also provide appropriate links in social media outreach that she does.

More details on the results of the survey and how it would help the Council understand the issues that affect the business community were discussed. Councilman Cahoon said that he wanted to keep the survey simple and easy to fill out to assist in understanding the most pressing issues that are affecting the business community.

Mr. Lis suggested that the survey link also be sent out to business emails that the City Clerk has, to help improve survey responses. Councilman Cahoon said he would look into this and perhaps look at providing something like a pamphlet in the City Clerk's office to help improve survey feedback results.

Mr. Leonardo said that the Commission met with the Comprehensive Plan consultant Horsley Witten to discuss the economic development element and that the Commission had specific

feedback to the consultant at that meeting and that these findings will undoubtedly be shared with the City Council. There was additional discussion on the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Lis asked about the commission potentially receiving more funds to further help the business community. With federal aid coming to the City, Mr. Lis indicated it would certainly be beneficial if some of this federal funds could be applied to the Economic Development Commission to provide more dollars to assist businesses in the City. Councilman Cahoon thought this was a very valid point and that he would definitely support seeing a portion of funds allocated to the Commission for additional loans to assist business.

Councilman Cahoon thanked the Commission for allowing him the opportunity to meet with them.

Chairwoman Botelho also wanted to thank Laura McNamara for her participation in the recent Mayor's Forum event held on March 4th before the meeting wrapped up.

V. Adjournment

On a Motion by Mr. Leonardo and seconded by Mr. Brun, the Commission unanimously voted to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 7:49 pm

Respectfully submitted,

James Moran

Recording Secretary