

**MINUTES
CITY OF WOODSTOCK
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
January 14, 2014**

The regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission of the City of Woodstock was called to order at 8:04AM on Tuesday, January 14, 2014, by Chairperson Rick Francois in the Council Chambers at Woodstock City Hall, 121 West Calhoun, Woodstock, Illinois. A roll call was taken by Chief Deputy Clerk Cindy Smiley.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Craig Hallenstein, Henry Patel, and Rick Francois.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Arlene Lynes and David Bricker

STAFF PRESENT: Cort Carlson, Director of Community and Economic Development and Chief Deputy Clerk Cindy Smiley.

OTHERS PRESENT: David Diehl, Aurora University

GENERAL BUSINESS

Survey Discussion

Arlene Lynes arrived at 8:05AM.

Noting that the Commission members have had time to review the survey responses, R. Francois opened the floor for discussion.

C. Hallenstein stated that the first thing he noticed was that the respondents were more highly educated and had above-average incomes which is not consistent with the demographics of Woodstock. He feels that the results may, therefore, be skewed.

D. Diehl stated that typically more highly educated, higher income people are more likely to respond to surveys. He also noted that the responses did not represent a substantial number of the households in Woodstock. As the survey concerned primarily shopping, dining, and entertainment in Woodstock, he stated that the question becomes whether the respondents represent a substantial segment of the buying power.

R. Francois stated that the goal of the survey is to be a tool to identify initiatives and opportunities.

D. Diehl also stated that it is more common for individuals to be more vocal about disappointments than things with which they are satisfied.

Discussion followed of the concerns expressed on the surveys concerning taxes and the difficulty this presents when trying to attract new business. R. Francois stated that

attracting a significant employer would add a lot to the tax base and that this should be a topic of further discussion for the Commission. D. Diehl felt that the comments on taxes had more to do with the state's approach to business taxes as opposed to the City's taxation.

Discussion then turned to the survey comments concerning transportation, particularly Rt. 47. In response to a request from R. Francois, C. Carlson updated the Commission on the status of Rt. 47 improvements, noting that this is an IDOT project with some funds having been set aside for Phase II Engineering. He further stated that this is not an immediate project for IDOT and that the City has secured the services of a lobbyist to try to advance the Rt. 47, Rt. 14, and Metra projects on behalf of the City.

Discussion continued on Rt. 47 with the Commission expressing concerns with where the improvements will be made and the effect they will have on the businesses. It was suggested that the City better communicate its efforts to improve transportation and the limited authority it has over the progress.

H. Patel stated that Rt. 47 has lots of traffic with many people seeing Woodstock and that it should be made more attractive. In response to a question, C. Carlson stated that the City has no plans to improve the appearance along Rt. 47 until the roadway improvements are made as it is not known what the construction will entail. A. Lynes expressed the opinion that the Commission should recommend to the City Council that Rt. 47 be cleaned up.

Noting that one of the complaints on the surveys was kids on the Square, C. Hallenstein stated that the community police are doing a good job. He further stated that if the kids are not committing crimes, they should be left alone as they have the same rights as adults.

Discussion followed of how the retailers can support the Square and encourage other businesses to come to the Square. A. Lynes described the coalition of retailers that came together to promote holiday events this season.

C. Hallenstein suggested sharing the survey comments with District 200, particularly as they pertain to the schools. He further suggested that the school district should partner with the realtors to "sell" Woodstock.

H. Patel suggesting using hotel-motel tax money to place a large sign on Rt. 47 featuring the Woodstock Square.

Discussion following of the gravel pit and the proposed baseball park development. The Commission requested a complete follow-up report on this project.

The Commission then made some suggestions as a result of the survey results:

- 1) Communicate where things stand on Rt. 47, including giving regular updates to residents.

- 2) Provide names and addresses of contact people at IDOT and the state regarding Rt. 47 improvements should residents wish to contact them directly.
- 3) Encourage property owners on Rt. 47 to keep their property looking attractive and presentable.
- 4) Explore the possibility of a façade improvement program for Rt. 47
- 5) Explore the possibility of the City making low-interest loans to help new and existing businesses to expand.
- 6) Explore more and better signage along Rt. 47 directing motorists to “the historic Woodstock Square.”
- 7) Develop a marketing campaign using funds from the hotel-motel tax.

It was agreed that the Commission members will forward bullet points to C. Carlson via e-mail concerning the survey results, how to communicate these to the community and to the City Council, and the next steps to be taken. These will be reviewed at the next meeting and a report developed to be sent to the Council along with the survey report. D. Diehl will summarize the survey report should they wish to include his summary.

COMMISSION COMMENTS/UPDATES

C. Carlson gave an update on various new businesses which have opened in Woodstock including Athletico Physical Therapy and Dave’s Woodstock Music. He noted that demolition work is occurring in the interior of the former Elks building in preparation of marketing it and that Off the Rails, a new restaurant to be located on Main Street, is hiring staff.

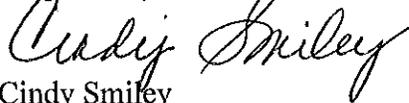
C. Hallenstein suggested contacting the new purchaser of the Dominick’s chain to see if they now own the property in Woodstock.

C. Carlson stated that the RFP for the development of the Old Courthouse and Sherriff’s House will be going out tomorrow.

ADJOURN

Motion by A. Lynes, second by C. Hallenstein, to adjourn to the next Regular Meeting at 8:00AM on Tuesday, February 11, 2014. Ayes: Hallenstein, Lynes, Patel, and Francois. Nays: none. Abstentions: none. Absentees: Bricker. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:23AM

Respectfully submitted,



Cindy Smiley
Chief Deputy Clerk