

**MINUTES  
CITY OF WOODSTOCK  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
November 11, 2014**

The regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission of the City of Woodstock was called to order at 8:07 AM on Tuesday, November 11, 2014, by Chairperson Rich Francois in the Council Chambers at Woodstock City Hall, 121 West Calhoun, Woodstock, Illinois. A roll call was taken by Deputy City Clerk Amy Weber.

**COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rich Francois, Craig Hallenstein, Ryan O'Connor and Henry Patel.

**COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:** Arlene Lynes

**STAFF PRESENT:** Cort Carlson, Director of Community and Economic Development, Joe Napolitano, Economic Development Coordinator, and Deputy City Clerk Amy Weber.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

H Patel made a motion to approve the minutes for the April – May, 2014 and July 2014 meetings. C Hallenstein seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**GENERAL BUSINESS/DISCUSSION**

Commission members moved to reviewing the draft economic development plan as submitted by staff:

R Francois stated that they needed to go through the Draft Economic Development Plan in a lot more detail. He suggested the Commission look at the draft as a first shot. C Carlson stated that J Napolitano created the draft based on review of best practices and past Commission discussions.

R Francois referred to the first page of the Draft Economic Development Plan where it shoots for creating a climate for growth. He suggested the Commission go through the plan to see if that is accurate enough. Secondly, they should plan with local staff and get into the vision: that the City of Woodstock is a desired place. First question: Where did this come from?

J Napolitano stated that this is something we will be creating.

C Carlson stated that everything staff does feeds back into the City's vision statement and is intended to reflect the 2020 plan.

C Hallenstein referred to "Most desirable place." He said that "We talked about this last time," and that he had asked then where did the assignment come from? When the commission was formed, the primary goal from the mayor was to create a plan for the city, so the goal of the commission is to create a plan for economic growth. He suggested that the alternative is, if the city wants to come up with a plan instead, then we should just junk this and start over. He

C Hallenstein asked that all strengths be included. He believes that we need to look for leadership to come out and be a tool to bring about economic development.

C Carlson noted several other strengths, including the city's wide range of employable workers, the fact that Woodstock's workforce is diverse and that we are experiencing some growth again. He said that he thinks the city is pro-growth, pro-business retention. He cited examples like Kohl's and Harley Davidson that show the city's commitment to business retention. He also noted the recent efforts by the city to work with manufacturing leadership, to take on a more dynamic role in the downtown square area. The enterprise zone application is another example of how the City is working to court new business development and assist in the filling of vacant industrial sites.

C Hallenstein noted that the community survey was very complacent, like our town, very comfortable. He feels that much of the community couldn't care less for growth, and the rest would like to see couple new stores and that's about it. The city is welcoming new business, the staff is in place, but pro-growth is not the city's Number one strength.

R O'Connor said that the document is more an outline than a plan. It doesn't contain concrete items. He emphasized a need for action items, tangible goals, for pro-growth in retail, commercial and manufacturing. Woodstock should feel attractive to businesses. He also noted the loss of a few cornerstones, larger businesses and suggested presenting this as a plus- the city has infrastructure in place. He also felt it to important that everyone recognize that the city still has a long way to go. He expressed frustration with the slow pace of progress in the city and that the same road blocks—IDOT, politics, state funding, Route 47, bad roads—are still be used many years later. He suggested breaking down the larger issues, which can be overwhelming in scope, into smaller, targeted actions. He feels the plan is a good outline, a good stab at strategic vision, but isn't comfortable presenting it to the council and mayor.

C Carlson stated that the staff had presented a broad plan to commission and was looking to them to help develop ways to take those broad items and break them down into action that staff can perform on a day to day basis. He also noted that those actions need to remain part of a broader goal or vision.

R Francois stated we're looking for a two year plan, along with a strategic time line that includes immediate goals and long term goals. He feels the Commission can accomplish this with the current format if it could boil it down to the crucial points. R O'Connor agreed the Commission needs to boil down the plan before presenting it to city.

R Francois suggested pushing forward today by reviewing the SWOT analysis at a high level and with a 24 month timeframe. He stated that pro-growth is not a strength currently, but it is definitely an opportunity. C Hallenstein agreed. R O'Connor also agreed. He suggested a need to take a close look at the demographics in the city and to try to deal with what is real, not with politics or perceptions.

R O'Connor stated he is not challenging for direct response, but for more lobbying, for more ideas and actions that can grab people's attention. The state isn't going to change any time soon, but rallying business leaders, the guerilla warfare approach, and other actions can move things in our direction. We need to take the bull by the horns or we'll get even further behind. He suggested two or three targeted action points for the final, written plan and encouraged each commission member to bring back one or two items to the table. He also encouraged everyone to think aggressively.

R Francois noted they were short of time and asked the member to give their top three strategic initiatives. His were: 1. Attract businesses, 2. Fix Route 47 problems related to infrastructure. He suggested emailing to Cort the top three initiatives.

C Hallenstein said his initiatives were: 1. Bringing more employers (jobs) 2. Speeding up process on Route 47 and 3. Bringing down residential taxes as a corollary of #1.

The commission discussed the importance of metrics, of tracking jobs added, but also jobs lost, and the impact of fees, as well as sewer rates and water rates.

#### **COMMISSION COMMENTS/UPDATES**

Cort gave an update on Enterprise Zones application and the city's joint effort with Harvard and the County to establish an Enterprise Zone. The application is due at end of year and will be reviewed in Springfield. Notification should be received by late 2015 with Zone to be established beginning in 2016. The Enterprise Zone will be a good redevelopment tool for the city.

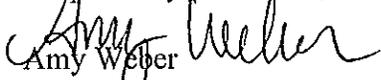
Ryan noted that Woodstock is nicely situated between O'Hare and the Rockford airport, so maybe we can attract distribution centers for Amazon or similar companies. Woodstock is great for logistics, and there is good access to Woodstock with something picked up at 1:30am being delivered to L.A. by 9am the following day.

Joe is working with brew pubs in and around Chicago to see if they would want to expand in Woodstock. The local winery is close to being finalized, the potential owners hope to close on the property in mid-December.

Cort provided an update on the Route 47 project and IDOT's proposed options that include the possible addition of (5) roundabouts or improving the current lighted intersections.

**Craig H. made a motion to adjourn, Rich F. seconding. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.**

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Amy Weber  
Deputy City Clerk