

**MINUTES
CITY OF WOODSTOCK
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
January 13, 2015**

The regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission of the City of Woodstock was called to order at 8:04 AM on Tuesday, January 13, 2015, 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, Ryan O'Connor and Henry Patel.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Arlene Lynes, Craig Hallenstein.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by H Patel, second by Ryan O'Connor to approve the minutes for the November 11, 2014 regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: R Francois, R O'Connor, H Patel. Nays: none. Abstentions: none. Absentees: none.

GENERAL BUSINESS/DISCUSSION

C Carlson announced that Arlene Lynes submitted a letter of resignation from the Economic Development Commission (EDC). R Francois asked commission members if they had anyone in mind for her replacement. H Patel stated that he had a couple of people in mind. C Carlson asked the commission to send him their recommendations.

1-Draft Economic Development Plan (EDP)

C Carlson stated that the plan for this meeting was to go through the EDP in more detail. He was hoping that C Hallenstein would be in attendance to discuss his recommendations and opinions.

R Francois asked C Carlson if there were any updates to the plan since the November 11, 2014 EDC meeting. C Carlson stated that 3 major initiatives were identified: Bring more jobs to the city, Route 47 improvement, and reduce tax rates. C Carlson stated that the Commission should look at these initiatives and identify action items for each one. R O'Connor stated that he thought the general tone of the last meeting was to look for more tangible actions to be done instead of general statements and asked if anyone brought suggestions with more tangible action items for this meeting.

To bring new jobs to the City, J Napolitano asked the Commission to look at page 7, Strategies to Attract More Businesses to Woodstock. J Napolitano stated that the goals listed are a start, but they were looking for additional input from the Commission. J Napolitano added that C Hallenstein was very interested in measureable things and asked them to keep that in mind as more specific goals are developed.

R Francois asked about retaining current businesses. J Napolitano stated that retention of current businesses must be included, as well as looking into what current businesses need in order to expand. R O'Connor asked C Carlson if he was aware of how many people are relocating to or away from Woodstock. He also recommended doing exit interviews with businesses leaving Woodstock to understand their decisions as to why they left, and what were the plusses and minuses of Woodstock. R Francois stated that Woodstock benefited from the Brown acquisition, how Brown centralized jobs to Woodstock from other areas in the county and then sold their business to a larger company. He added that we need to find out why these decisions were made.

R Francois stated that they need some action plans to put into that strategy. C Carlson stated that staff performs retention visits, reaches out to local corporations on a regular basis, and will create a quarterly follow-up reports for each one. H Patel stated that they should be looking at existing business in town to see where they are expanding and reach out to them and create incentives to help them keep their businesses in town. He commented that quite a few small businesses want to expand and they are looking around for the best incentives to help them expand. He also suggested checking into and comparing our incentives to incentives in other areas such as Wisconsin. R Francois asked if this could be made measurable. C Carlson stated that they could do x-number of business retention visits per month and provide data summaries to the EDC.

R Francois asked if there were any outreach efforts and action plans and where does the website stand. C Carlson stated that we have a community profile and J Napolitano updated the LOIS Regional Site Selector website s. He stated that they can access and update the information on the website to keep the Woodstock, IL information current. He added that the site can be customized to have the look and feel of the Woodstock City website, and reports can be generated from the site on information such as lease sales, demographics, and sale prices. R Francois asked if it's an actively used database. C Carlson stated that they don't have activity reports but it's a widely used site and a free service. J Napolitano stated the website is used nationally and 35 states use it to track data.

R Francois asked if the City could sponsor a lunch with area listing brokers to highlight certain premier properties. C Carlson stated that they don't have a budget for that type of event but these are things they will look at as they get into the next budgeting session. R O'Connor stated that if cost is too big of a hurdle than look into having the broker sponsor such events. C Carlson stated that the brokers may also want to help and he will ask them for feedback on how to make it happen. C Carlson added that they looked at the retail sectors and the overwhelming majority responded that they knew what Woodstock has to offer and that when they were ready to expand they will take another look at us. R Francois suggested that they meet with listing brokers to help identify any role the City can play to assist in marketing efforts.

R O'Connor asked about incentives. C Carlson replied that they have a TIF District, but it's specific to downtown Woodstock. The Enterprise zone will provide state and local incentive opportunities however we won't know until late in the year if we are successful. The City also has considered property tax abatements and sales tax sharing agreements and is willing to look at other incentives on an as needed basis. R O'Connor stated that State or Federal programs may have resources available and the City may be able to guide the decision makers to those resources, and we need to identify resources that people may not be aware of. R O'Connor suggested visiting the front page of the Wisconsin website to compare incentives and bullet point, in very simple terms, incentives that people may not even be aware that we have to offer.

R O'Conner stated that we need to identify how to connect to available resources. C Carlson stated that they can develop a PDF printable resource guide that can be listed on our website.

R Francois asked about meeting with other taxing bodies to see what they can do. C Carlson stated that they had a discussion with District 200 and they are working with them to develop enterprise zone incentives; however District 200 hasn't made any commitment yet. He added that the school district supports in theory an Enterprise Zone, however they don't want to give up potential funding sources. R Francois stated that the School District has to connect the dots on how this benefits them in long run and that a healthy job market in their school district has to be beneficial. C Carlson stated that they will continue discussions with the school district.

R Francois asked if any other school boards are doing anything different. C Carlson replied that the Harvard school district did do real estate tax abatements and we've presented that example to D200. R Francois stated that one action plan could be to investigate multiple taxing districts to see if real estate tax abatements are related to job growth. R Francois asked if there were any questions about the first strategy of the Economic Development Plan. No further comments. R Francois stated that the City's website needs to be completed as soon as possible. C Carlson stated that they've interviewed potential vendors to overhaul the City's website including a separate URL for Economic Development department and a decision on which vendor to use will hopefully be made within 2 weeks.

R Francois asked to discuss the second strategy of the EDP draft, Transportation. J Napolitano stated that part of the second strategy is to improve the transportation network and enhance Metra service. R Francois asked if we have a paid lobbyist. C Carlson replied in the affirmative. He stated that she was brought in for the Route 47 project to advocate with legislature and IDOT to push the project forward. R Francois stated that a goal should be to retain the lobbyist. He also asked if she works with Metra. C Carlson replied that our lobbyist works primarily with IDOT and Metra is not a current objective. He stated that she meets regularly with the Mayor and the City Manager.

R O'Connor asked if there has been any conversation about expanding Route 47 through the City before starting the segment from Huntley to Route 14. C Carlson answered that they've been in contact with IDOT but obtained no clear answer, and IDOT funded engineering studies but nothing for land acquisition and construction documents. R O'Connor stated that the Algonquin Road Bypass allows commuters to zip past downtown Algonquin which is great for commuters but not for local businesses. C Carlson stated that the bypass scenario was studied by IDOT but was not selected for further study. R Francois stated that IDOT has 100's of projects that they are looking at and we need to figure out how to get to the top of list. He added that matching funds could help move the plan along.

C Carlson stated that they hosted a meeting with several businesses along Rt. 47 to answer questions and to go over the proposed plans from IDOT. He stated that this meeting stimulated a lot of interest in the Rt. 47 project and they have been getting mixed signals from the business owners whereas some are happy with the current situation and others want to see a 6 lane highway through town. R O'Connor stated that historically people are resistant to change and we need to show real examples of how other communities benefited from additional lanes, such as increased traffic flow and more shoppers.

C Carlson stated that IDOT's options for the railroad bridge over Rt. 47 are either a roundabout at Lake Street and at McConnell Road, with no change to the bridge, or fully signalized

intersections with a brand new bridge crossing. He stated that the lighted intersections require a temporary shoe fly whereas the roundabout will save \$30 million. R O'Connor stated that it may be more cost-effective now but what about 30 years from now when we have roundabout congestion. J Napolitano stated that some business owners are for the roundabouts and some are against them. He stated that business owners are far more opposed to the raised center median because people will have to make a U-Turn to get to their businesses. C Carlson stated that everyone is supportive of some type of improvement but their real concern is how the changes will impact their businesses. Especially for those who are now just working through the economic downturn and they are concerned about how they will survive while the Rt. 47 project is being completed.

H Patel stated that most businesses along Rt. 47 were created a long time ago and quite a few of these businesses have small parking lots. He stated that loss of revenue for these businesses could be millions and it's something the City Manager's office should take seriously. C Carlson stated that they realize that the project will encroach on some parking lots and they are doing everything they can to find a solution that works for everyone. H Patel stated that the City should look at the bigger broader picture because after the expansion, if businesses are not healthy than what is the benefit.

R Francois asked why IDOT was pushing for a median. C Carlson replied that IDOT wants to eliminate the number of left turns to improve traffic flow. R Francois stated that when Crystal Lake was proposed a center median they lobbied against it and IDOT didn't put it in. The commission discussed possible solutions along Rt. 47 to improve parking. R O'Connor commented that in Rockford, IL the leadership base didn't lobby against a proposed roadway expansion and they got what was proposed. H Patel stated that people are going to want to sell their business to new owners who will not want to pay the price. R O'Connor stated that we have to look at the long term repercussions and what may happen to property values.

C Carlson stated that both proposals have pros and cons. With the roundabouts, we lose fewer businesses and less property is impacted. C Carlson stated that as far as the road itself, the State owns the right of way, we have no jurisdiction. R O'Connor stated that IDOT gave two proposed solutions. He commented that we could ask for an alternative solution. He stated that both proposed plans have significant drawbacks. He stated that it seems that this has been a main problem for the City for a very long time and still there is no solution. He stated that maybe we can lobby to the State to fund an engineering effort to study it, even to get an answer that there are no alternatives.

R Francois asked how they divert traffic when building a roundabout. C Carlson replied that they haven't gotten to that point in the planning stages yet. R O'Connor stated that it cost time to build roads and asked if we could lobby to have the construction occur over a shorter duration which may prevent some businesses from being choked off.

R Francois asked to suspend this discussion to the next meeting.

2-Economic Development Report

J Napolitano stated that Golden Rolls reopened and is doing well, UPS relocated to near the Sprint store, and Tequillaville is looking to open later this month. He also stated that the winery went to city council and received approval of a TIF agreement for funds to install sprinklers and provide handicap compliance. He stated that Harris Bank is closing its facility on Benton Street and consolidating, however they are planning to keep an ATM vestibule, but sell the building.

He also added that Taco bell is looking at sites for relocation. Several Brewpubs were contacted to see if they are willing to come to Woodstock, but they are not ready to relocate.

J Napolitano stated that he and C Carlson have met with parties interested in the former DB Hess Building and the Precision Quincy building. Building Staff has been involved to identify potential building code issues. He also stated that Bull Valley Ford is looking to expand and enhance their dealership, and are looking at sales tax sharing to help cover costs. He added that Woodstock Power Sports is looking at sites for a larger facility.

J Napolitano stated that they have upcoming events in Chicago and Las Vegas on how to attract retailers to the City. He stated that at the downtown retailers meetings they are trying to coordinate events and bring businesses together. He stated that the application is in for the Enterprise Zone although we won't know if we will get it until the end of September, 2015.

C Carlson stated that the Public House opened. He stated that they have another retail consultant coming to do a walk-through to give them ideas on the best uses for the Old Courthouse. He stated that the City finalized the agreement with train depot. Dan Hart who owns DC Cobbs is opening a multi-use facility with coffee, video gaming, bar service and a convenience store. They hope to have this up and running next month and the City is keeping the building open for commuters.

COMMISSION COMMENTS/UPDATES

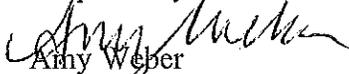
No comment

ADJOURN

Motion by H Patel, seconded by R. O'Connor to adjourn to the next Regular Meeting at 8:00AM on Tuesday, February 10, 2015. Ayes: H Patel, R Francois, R O'Connor. Nays: None. Abstentions: none. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:49AM.

Next meeting February 10, 2015

Respectfully Submitted



Amy Weber
Deputy City Clerk