

Middletown Economic Development Advisory Committee

Wednesday, September 9, 2015, 4:30 pm
Middletown Town Hall, Town Council Chambers

Members Present:

John Bagwill
Joseph A. Cirillo
Erin Donovan-Boyle, Newport County Chamber
Liana Ferreira Fenton
David Lepore
Robert M. Silva, Chairman
Barbara VonVillas, Town Council
Ron Wolanski, Town Planner

Member absent:

Nick Coogan
Rocky Kempenaar, Town Council
Tom Kowalczyk

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Silva at 4:35pm

1. Other business

Mr. Bagwill distributed an article regarding the difficulty tech companies have finding software developers. There was discussion of the need for school curriculums to address this need. Mr. Wolanski will distribute copies of the article to MEDAC members.

2. Approval of the minutes of the August 12, 2015 MEDAC meeting.

Motion by Mr. Cirillo, seconded Ms. Fenton, to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2015 meeting. **Vote:** 8-0-0.

3. Discussion of potential business improvement district in the Atlantic Beach District

Mr. Wolanski stated that since the August meeting, as requested by the committee, he had compiled a list of property owners in the area of the potential BID along with assessed property values. The area reviewed consisted of the exiting limited business zoning district. There are five property owners of the 32 that represent 66% of the value in the district. The chart also included a potential scenario of funding responsibility, should it be funded through a BID, for a project to install underground utilities in the district.

There was discussion of likelihood that the utilities project would be funded by a bond to be repaid over a 20-year period. This might impact how property owners react to the potential project. Mr. Wolanski was asked to determine how the repayment of a bond over time would compare to annual property tax payments.

Mr. Bagwill stated that he has been in contact with Ron Fleming to request any reports that might address the economic development benefits or impact on property values of removing utility poles and installing utilities underground.

This matter was continued to the next MEDAC meeting for further discussion.

4. Update on status of regional economic development efforts.

Ms. Donovan-Boyle stated that she would provide a copy of the final report presented by TIP Strategies on the strategic plan for establishing regional economic development. Mr. Wolanski distribute the report to the committee members. Current work involves developing the governance structure for the organization. There will also be a trip, possibly to Austin, TX, to visit and learn about a similar organization that is in operation.

5. Update on AIPC activities.

Mr. Wolanski stated that the AIPC has just hired a new executive director, Tom Ardito. He will be getting up to speed on projects of interest to the island communities. Mr. Ardito has indicated that the AIPC remains committed to assisting with continuing efforts related to broadband internet access on the Island. Mr. Wolanski was asked to invite Mr. Ardito to attend a future MEDAC meeting.

6. Business outreach efforts.

Mr. Wolanski stated that the committee has committed to ongoing outreach activities to the local business community. He recently had lunch with an executive at a local company who relayed his thoughts on the need for better marketing of the island and its quality of life to attract businesses, but also to attract the workforce to support businesses. Inviting state leaders to see what is happening on the island, including tours of businesses, was also seen as valuable.

Mr. Silva stated that he continues to reach out the governor's staff and the Commerce Corp. about a visit to Middletown. He will continue these efforts.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted
Ronald M. Wolanski, Town Planner