

Middletown Economic Development Advisory Committee

Wednesday, September 14, 2016, 4:30 pm
Middletown Town Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room

Members Present:

John Bagwill
Joseph A. Cirillo, Vice Chair
Liana Ferreira Fenton
Tom Kowalczyk
Robert M. Silva, Chairman
Barbara VonVillas, Town Council Liaison
Ron Wolanski, Town Planner

Members absent:

Nick Coogan
Erin Donovan-Boyle
David Lepore
Rocky Kempenaar, Town Council Liaison

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

1. Approval of the minutes of the August 10, 2016 MEDAC meeting.

Motion by Mr. Cirillo, seconded by Mr. Fenton, to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2016 meeting. Vote: 5-0-0. Mr. Bagwill had yet to arrive.

2. Continued discussion of potential revisions to the town's economic development incentive ordinance.

Mr. Wolanski provided a memo and described input he received from Tax Assessor George Durgin regarding potential expansion of the incentive program. Mr. Durgin's opinion is that the hotel market appears strong and is not in need of incentives. He recommended providing new or enhanced incentives to promote redevelopment or rehabilitation of existing commercial properties.

Mr. Wolanski provided an example of the magnitude of the incentive if applied to a hypothetical 100-room hotel development. Based on the current incentive for building construction, such a project would realize a reduction in property taxes paid to the town of approximately \$400,000 over six years.

The consensus of the committee was to consider modifications to the existing incentive ordinance to promote improvements and rehabilitation of existing commercial properties. Such incentives should be made available to retail and hospitality businesses in addition to the types of businesses currently eligible for the incentive program.

Mr. Wolanski offered to draft potential modifications to the existing ordinance. Discussion was continued to the October 12, 2016 MEDAC meeting.

3. Continued discussion of potential establishment of a business improvement district in the Atlantic Beach District, and potential projects.

Mr. Wolanski & Mr. Silva discussed a recent presentation of a project in Westerly to underground utilities in the Watch Hill area. Richard Youngken, one of the facilitators of that project, was invited to the October MEDAC meeting to discuss the project and how it might relate to recent discussions of possible undergrounding of utilities in the Atlantic Beach District.

Mr. Wolanski provided a draft PowerPoint presentation that could be used for the proposed meeting with business owners. There was discussion of the need to come to consensus on the boundaries of the district. Members expressed a need to have a high-quality presentation when the concept is first presented to the business owners in the proposed district. Examples of the types of projects that could be pursued should be included. Representatives from other existing BIDs, such as the Thayer Street district, could be part of the presentation.

It was decided that the BID concept will be discussed with Mr. Youngken during the next meeting to see if he has any insights based on his experience. Mr. Wolanski was asked reach out the staff of the Thayer St. district about attending an upcoming MEDAC meeting.

Discussion was continued to the October 12, 2016 MEDAC meeting.

4. Update on status of the town's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) application.

Mr. Wolanski stated that the final TIP has yet to be released, but he is hopeful that the town's requested additions to the project list for Aquidneck Ave. will be included. He will update the committee once the final TIP is released.

5. Update on status of regional economic development efforts

Mr. Wolanski stated that that a steering committee of Chamber members, including the municipalities, is currently in the process of considering governance options for the proposed regional economic development office.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted
Ronald M. Wolanski, Town Planner