

NORTH SMITHFIELD INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2008

PRESENT: Michael R. Dowling; Robert E. Nault; Kenneth L. Peloquin; Alfred S. Puccetti; Bernice F. Salzberg

ALSO: Town Administrator Paulette D. Hamilton; John Flaherty, Acting Interim Town Planner; Michelle M. Godin of New England Economic Development Services, Inc.

ABSENT: None

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 PM.

Public Comment

Peloquin welcomed newly elected Town Administrator Hamilton and Acting Interim Town Planner John Flaherty. Introductions took place.

Discussion w/ Paulette Hamilton

Peloquin stated that the Commission would like to hear from Hamilton about her plans for the Industrial Development Commission. First, however, Peloquin read a letter addressed to Hamilton and copied to him from Scott Gibbs indicating that New England Economic Development Services, Inc. will no longer be providing consulting and advisory services to the Town of North Smithfield effective January 1, 2009.

Hamilton asked the Commission to inform her about its activities and plans. Peloquin mentioned that the Commission was successful in the establishment of a tax stabilization policy, development of an economic development web site that is linked to the Town's web site, and the crafting of a proposed "Planned Corporate Zone". Furthermore, Peloquin mentioned that he and Puccetti served on the Branch Village Task Force, and the Commission provided financial assistance for the Branch Village endeavor on two occasions. Additionally, Peloquin noted that Puccetti serves as a member of the Ordinance Review Committee.

Nault stated that former Town Administrator Robert Lowe was clear about his position in support of commercial growth. Hamilton stated that she wants commercial growth to assist in the expansion of the tax base. Hamilton said the law suits against the Town are likely to cost the taxpayers money. Furthermore, Hamilton said the Town needs to have "pad ready" sites, and the Town needs to be business friendly. Nault said the Town has an anti-business image. Furthermore, Nault mentioned that prior to retirement he was responsible for the siting of a 250,000 square foot facility and North Smithfield was not a consideration. Nault stated that the facility was located in the Town of Cumberland due to the rapid response time and the support of Mayor Daniel McKee, the Town Council, Planning & Zoning Boards and the assistance of Scott Gibbs in working with all parties, including residential neighbors.

Hamilton raised the matter of the Small Business Loan Fund. There was discussion about past loans and uses of the funds. Hamilton suggested that the Commission give thought to how the remaining funds could best be utilized. Nault mentioned the possibility of making small business loans to businesses that locate in the Branch Village District.

Hamilton asked if the Commission would interface with the Redevelopment Agency. Peloquin indicated that he could foresee the two entities working together on matters of common interest. Flaherty stated that he felt the Commission and the Redevelopment Agency had similar missions and proceeded to read that section of the Town Charter pertaining to the establishment of the Commission. Godin pointed out that the Redevelopment Agency has "teeth" and the Commission has none. The difference between the two entities is significant. Puccetti comment that the Redevelopment Agency's focus pertains to one area in Town. Both Hamilton and Flaherty responded that the Redevelopment Agency could establish additional redevelopment districts in Town.

Peloquin informed Hamilton that he believes the most important task the Commission needs to accomplish is finalization and adoption of the proposed Planned Corporate Overlay Zone. Flaherty suggested the Commission host a Chamber of Commerce breakfast. Hamilton suggested that the Commission participate in a small business

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expo. Flaherty mentioned that there needs to be greater awareness about the tax stabilization policy. Nault suggested providing a package of information to the businesses in Town, which would include the tax stabilization policy and the Small Business Loan Fund.

Before departing the meeting, Hamilton mentioned a "Buy Local" initiative taking place on December 18, 2008 that is being spearheaded by Barbara Laverne and Ken Raspallo.

Discussion: Sewer Assessments

There was discussion about the proposed sewer assessment formula. Puccetti and Peloquin stated that it represents a two-tier tax whereby businesses are burdened with an off-set for the residential taxpayer. Peloquin said such a formula further enhances North Smithfield's anti-business image.

Discussion: Planned Corporate Zone

Godin said she would provide Flaherty with the most recent revisions to the proposed Planned Corporate Zone, which were made as a result of the joint meeting between the Ordinance Review Committee and the Commission.

Update: Web Site

Godin stated that she would continue to update the Commission's web site beyond December 31, 2008 as a courtesy to the Commission and at the direction of Peloquin.

Update: Branch Village District

Flaherty briefly reported that the Branch Village Task Force voted to disband now that their work is complete. Flaherty said the Redevelopment Agency is charged with implementation of the plan, but their work cannot commence until the Town Council makes appointments to the agency. According to Flaherty, the short list consists of Linda Thibault, John Gregory and Robert Nault.

Update: Commercial Developments

Flaherty indicated that he is not current on matters and will review a box of files left by former Town Planner Michael Phillips. At Peloquin's request, Nault said he would follow up on the status of Stop & Shop's proposed project.

Nault noted that it is not in the Town's best interest to have a part-time Town Planner. Puccetti concurred stating that the public needs access to a Town Planner during business hours. Flaherty said he would be in Town Hall on Wednesday afternoons and all day on Thursdays.

There was discussion about retaining the services of Michelle Godin for coordination and clerical purposes. Flaherty indicated that he would determine the hourly rate for the Planning Board's secretary. Godin said she would discuss the matter with Scott Gibbs and report back to Peloquin.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. Peloquin
Chairman