

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes

February 21, 1995

Present:

G. Daley
S. Shapiro
J. Milardo
N. Conaway-Raczka (7:15)

Absent:

R. Santangelo

Also present:

JL Pizarro
C. Stannard, *Press*
W. Daley, *Courant*
W Kuehn, staff
C. Wilcox, staff

Chairman Daley called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. in Room B-15 of the Municipal Building.

Public Session: No one from the public wished to speak.

Minutes: Upon a motion by S. Shapiro, seconded by J. Milardo, the minutes of the December 12, 1994 meeting were accepted unanimously.

Downtown Manager's Report: JL Pizzaro was present and handed out a packet of detailed reports showing his progress toward the establishment of the Downtown Special Services District. He pointed out the contrasts between these reports and previous ones in January. The Action Plan was back on time - a majority of proponents had been reached in February, and the proposed ordinance would go to the Ordinance Study Committee in March. The Council will review it in April, and the referendum is scheduled for May. He went on to point out the statistics of the property owners' survey which showed a numerical majority of 53.50% and a valuation majority of 54% in favor of the District. He further gave statistics of his business recruitment and leasing in terms of square feet and six recent store openings downtown. Referring to the other materials in the packet, he concluded that he was very positive and proud of the progress and commended Vincent Amato, Richard Wrubel and David Gallitto for their hard work with the property owners. The Committee inquired about the voting procedure, which JL Pizzaro said it must be by means of a mailed ballot. He further reported that Middletown was going to be a strong contender to be one of the first communities designated under the National Trust's ***Main Street Program*** which was recently funded in Connecticut by Norheat Utilities.

Economic Development Fund Balance: The Committee discussed the Economic Development Fund report, but took no action.

Mayor's Request for Funds for Middletown 2000: The Committee discussed the Middletown 2000 which is a group, reinvigorated during the P. Gionfriddo administration, of City leaders who look at major policy issues and trends. N.Conaway-Raczka reported it was an interesting Committee comprised of public and private sector individuals, but she wanted some more information about the \$2,000 request before considering it seriously.

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She moved to table this item; the motion was seconded by S. Shapiro and voted unanimously. J. Milardo said he would not support it in any case; since Middletown 2000 gets United Way money and the taxpayers should not have to support it.

Hartford Symphony/MHS Request for Economic Development Funds: The Committee commented that Mr. Fragilio was supposed to come back with matching private dollars or Arts money; and that the Mayor wanted the money to come out of the Municipal Development Office budget. Because the latter was not possible, the request was pulled from the Council agenda. The EDC noted they had already voted on this item and did not need to do so again, and that this issue should go back to the Council. N. Conaway-Raczka said she would also like to know where the rest of the funding was coming from.

Long Hill Estate Market Study Request for Funds: C. Wilcox briefed the Committee on the progress of the Long Hill Estate Committee in coming up with a viable funding/financial plan for the Estate by next July. Even though the cost of a market study is included in the 1995/96 budget, the timing for that was actually backwards. The market study is needed right now, on which a funding plan can be based; and the Mayor urged staff to move forward with this as quickly as possible. Municipal Development Office staff recommended using funds from the America's Cup Restaurant rent for this, and estimated the cost at \$12,500. The Committee agreed and a motion was made by N. Conaway-Raczka, seconded by J. Milardo, and voted unanimously to recommend to the Council the transfer of \$12,500 from the restaurant revenues in the Economic Development Fund to the Long Hill Estate line item for the purpose of a market study.

Route 9 Planning Forum: C. Wilcox reported to the Committee about the interest of many other groups in pulling together interested parties and organizations in order to develop a unified vision for Middletown with regards to its relationship between the Downtown, the River and Route 9. Many different groups were concerned with specific areas such as the NEIA, the bridge plan over Route 9, the interchanges on the south end, Harborpark, and hiking trails, to name a few; but no one was looking at the entire problem. The Rockfall Foundation has offered to host some kind of a forum on this, with follow-up workshops or whatever it takes to develop and articulate a shared vision for the City. The Committee was interested in this, and suggested touching base with the legislative delegation and meeting with DOT. They urged getting bi-partisan support and was pleased that Rockfall was willing to provide this forum. They pointed out that the Mayor meets with the delegation on the first Monday of the month, and could introduce this idea to them at that time.

North End Industrial Area: W. Kuehn reported he had met with DED staff regarding potential strategies for including the NEIA in the Enterprise Zone. They had come up with a two-pronged approach. First the legislature could be asked to lower the threshold regarding inclusion of Chapter 132 projects in an Enterprise Zone when a portion of it is within the boundaries. Currently, the legislation allows for an entire Chapter 132 to be

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included if more than 50% of the area is eligible to be in the Enterprise Zone anyway. We would ask the legislature to lower this threshold to 25%. If that should pass, then, through another process the Chapter 132 NEIA project would change its boundaries to exclude all the unbuildable land in the dump and wetlands as well as residential areas such as Miller & Bridge Streets and the Rome and Pease Avenues area. Currently the NEIA has 134 acres, 12.4 of which are in the Enterprise Zone. The boundary change would reduce it to 44 acres; and 12.4 is more than 25% of that.

The EDC went on to discuss the 50/50% money match versus the 90/10% allowed by the Enterprise Zone; and reiterated their position of last month that the City should insist that the State honor Middletown's new status as a Targeted Investment Community. They asked staff to ask DED to explain to the City what basis exists for keeping the funding at 50/50. They felt they were entitled to the 90% match and wanted DED to respond to this.

On another related topic, the Committee noted that the fence at St. John's, on the Bridge side, was now a hazard. It is the State's responsibility, and should be fixed.

REINVEST: An application from Claudia DeFrance of "Simply Elegant" will be needing the Committee's review. N. Conaway-Raczka stated she would not be participating in this since she had a conflict with "Simply Elegant". Upon a motion by Chairman Daley, seconded by J. Milardo, the Committee voted to meet on Feb. 27th at 6:30 to address this one item.

Preservation Board Plaques: C. Wilcox requested permission to switch \$400.00 from some line items in the Municipal Development Office administrative budget which were no longer needed in order to buy two plaques for the Preservation awards for 1995. A motion was made by S. Shapiro, seconded by J. Milardo, and voted unanimously to transfer \$400 to the Preservation Board for the award plaques.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:15.

Cynthia G. Wilcox

CGW/bds