

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Minutes: July 13, 1992

PRESENT

S. Shapiro, Chair
S. Gionfriddo
N. Conaway-Raczka
W. Corvo

ABSENT

E. Pattavina

STAFF PRESENT

W. Kuehn
L. Ozga
C. Wilcox

ALSO PRESENT

A. Gary, AHV
C. Ferrero, AHV
J. Belair
S. Beinhorn, Press
G. Souto

Chairman S. Shapiro called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in Room B-20 of the Municipal Building.

Minutes

Upon a motion by W. Corvo, seconded by S. Shapiro, the minutes of June 11, 1992 were accepted. S. Gionfriddo and N. Conaway-Raczka abstained.

Marino Manor Expansion

W. Kuehn introduced Al Gary and Chris Ferrero, two members of the Affordable Housing Ventures team, and turned the meeting over to them for a status report and update on the site plan for the additional units of elderly housing at Marino Manor. Chris Ferrero showed the latest site plan noting that it showed one parking space per unit - a zone change recently approved by P&Z. There would be a density of 10-11 units per acre, and his timetable indicated they would be ready to build by mid to late fall. The project has expanded beyond the production of 10 new units on the former Long Hill School site to the addition of 8 more new units to be added to the current Marino Manor site to the west. AHV would design and build all of these then turn them over to the Housing Authority. Al Gary indicated his firm would be pursuing the financing, while Chris Ferrero (Inland Hixon), would go ahead with the detailed site planning. A. Gary reported that DOH has money and is interested. Deputy Commissioner E. Moseley is familiar with the project. Even though, they do not need pre-qualification from DOH, he cautioned that the funding availability by late fall might be optimistic. L. Ozga asked if the City could help, to which A. Gary replied that support from the right "bell ringers" could always help.

S. Shapiro asked if the planning and fundraising would go on concurrently and how long the project would take to build. A. Gary indicated AHV would take the risk of doing the detailed drawings while the financing was pending. He estimated 9-12 months for construction.

Business Retention Survey

Jean Belair gave a status report of the survey indicating that his interviews were completed and that he had met last week with W. Kuehn and C. Wilcox to discuss and plan for the final report. He requested a reasonable block of time at the September meeting of EDC to discuss the survey in depth. His observations to date were as follows:

- 1) the biggest problem is the "Credit Crunch"... the DED ads do not hold true... businesses are operating on margins and solely on cash flow... DED is not co-operative, not helpful, and not staffed with "bankers".
- 2) There is a quality imperative... the need to institute quality at all costs to attune workers to the needs of customers.
- 3) Profits are marginal... manufacturers are selling product at 1985 prices but making it at 1992 costs.
- 4) Image problem... it would help if Middletown were better thought of - i.e. the negative image of Main Street.
- 5) Location excellent... this is the best reason for businesses to be here.
- 6) He was universally welcomed... business people are anxious to talk and appreciated having the City make the effort to talk to them.

Mr. Belair went on to say that a page in the final report will be devoted to each business, and individual issues will be noted there.

Regarding the request for payment of \$9,000, a motion was made by S. Gionfriddo, seconded by W. Corvo, and voted to pay the invoice of \$9,000 to Martin Belair Assoc. All voted in favor except N. Conaway-Raczka who opposed.

Downtown Promotion

L. Ozga reported she had been in contact with Michael Blais of the Courant regarding the cost (which includes design) of a stand-by Ad. To run an ad three (3) times in Zone 6 would be \$161.12 and in Zones 4 or 5, \$266.49. She noted that her DED colleagues indicate a desire among CT Businesses to move within the State. S. Shapiro said he had a personal aversion to this type of advertising. He felt a stand-by ad would get buried, and one could get more attention using local and business papers. S. Gionfriddo felt that the Committee wouldn't risk much for only \$166 and N. Conaway-Raczka agreed. Upon a motion by S. Gionfriddo, seconded by N. Conaway-Raczka, it was voted unanimously to expend \$161.12 to put 3 advertisements in Zone 6 of the Hartford Courant. L. Ozga reminded the EDC that a meeting with Ken Gronbach on promotion of the City was scheduled for July 21st at 5:00 and it will be posted.

Economic Development Analysis by Caroline Samuels

W. Kuehn noted that many of the recommendations in Ms. Samuels' report were also being suggested by the EDTF such as development of a package of incentives, and the idea of a special services district for the Downtown. (W. Corvo left at 7:50 p.m.) Discussion ensued on how to pursue the recommendations; N. Conaway-Raczka urged the Committee to look at what they can do for the City and then to go one step further. The Committee agreed the Downtown is unique, and the City should look at it as a different business area than the commercial arteries or industrial areas elsewhere in Middletown. No definite actions were taken on this agenda item.

YCC

The Committee noted the suggestions of the Conservation Commission for YCC help in clearing brush at the Coughlin Property; trails on Russo and Plum properties and a pedestrian bridge on the Guida property. W. Kuehn noted the trails are already in this year's work plan, but the crew does not have much time for more projects this year. S. Gionfriddo asked if we could hire an extra crew using John LaRosa's new program monies ("LA Riot Funds"). The Committee thought this would be a good idea for staff to investigate.

North End Industrial Area

W. Kuehn referred to the letter to Michelle Stronz in the packet asking for information concerning any agreements between MIDC, Ltd. and Standard Motor Parts and the EIS Phase II studies. S. Gionfriddo asked if DED Commissioner McGee knew what was going on with this; and felt the EIS portion should not hold back the rest of the project. W. Kuehn reported he had broached the subject of splitting the project with DED, but did not have an answer yet. S. Gionfriddo felt if McGee was aware of the problem, he may be able to "break the log jam"; and the Committee felt it would be appropriate to have the Mayor's Office make that inquiry.

North End HCD Grant (DOH)

W. Kuehn gave an update on the rehab portion of the grant indicating over \$310,000 of work will be under construction by September 1st. A problem is that applicants have to go to rental rehab or other lower income programs. The Green Street sidewalk portion of the grant depends on the timing of the CSO Project; and Green Street is scheduled for Spring of 1993. The playground ran into bid problems for the design which not only delayed the project, but no designer came in anywhere near to the budget. The Committee felt strongly that Public Works should be able to do this design work in house. They were familiar with the drainage in the area; and indicated Bob Dobmeier had been offered to help with it. C. Wilcox reported that the trees must go in by August 31st; so the construction will have to work around them.

REINVEST

S. Shapiro asked if the City had a bank for this program yet. W. Kuehn replied negatively. The Committee felt the bank should be recruited as a professional services agreement through the Mayor.

Rt. 9 Design

W. Kuehn reported that a subcommittee had been formed under the auspices of the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust and that it had applied for funds from the National Preservation Trust fund to create mock-ups of the DOT plans for the model in the lobby.

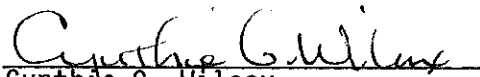
Other

W. Kuehn reported he was getting cost estimates on a new computer system for the office and indicated that new typing stations would be needed very soon. The old machines are giving out.

Regarding Marino Manor, Seb Passanesi would like his plans returned; and upon a motion by S. Gionfriddo, seconded by N. Conaway-Raczka, it was voted unanimously to do so.

Upon a motion by S. Gionfriddo, seconded by S. Shapiro, it was voted to go into executive session at 8:15 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter, according to the Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 3, Section 1-18a(e), to discuss a personnel matter at 8:15 p.m.

S. Gionfriddo and S. Shapiro voted in favor; N. Conaway-Raczka opposed... motion passed. The Committee came out of executive session at 8:30 p.m. and there being no further business, the meeting adjourned.


Cynthia G. Wilcox

CGW/lmk