

MINUTES

WATERTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

TOWN HALL ANNEX
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2008 – 7:30 P.M.

- PRESENT:** Suzanne Church
Joseph McGrail, Chairman
Theodore Migliarese, Secretary
Donato Orsini
Jack Traver, Vice Chairman
- ABSENT:** Carmine DiPietro
Norman Marcoux
- ALTERNATES PRESENT:** John Manno
Patricia Pawlak
- ALTERNATES ABSENT:** None
- OTHERS PRESENT:** Bob Atkinson, Weichert Realtors
John Lee, Lee Capital Advisors, LLC
Joseph Seacrist, Economic Development Coordinator

1. Convene Regular Meeting - 7:30 P.M.

Mr. McGrail, Chairman, Called the Meeting to Order at 7:32 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Mr. McGrail, Chairman, executed the Roll Call.

Mr. McGrail Chairman, asked Ms. Pawlak to sit in for Mr. Marcoux, in his absence.

Mr. McGrail, Chairman, asked Mr. Manno to sit in for Mr. DiPietro, in his absence.

3. Public Participation

John Lee, Lee Capital Advisors, LLC

Mr. Lee discussed his desire to buy and restore old historic buildings, using renewable energy. A lengthy discussion ensued.

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4. Minutes

A. Regular Meeting – November 20, 2008

MOTION: (Mr. Traver, sec. Mr. Manno) to Approve the Regular Meeting Minutes dated November 20, 2008 as presented.

Discussion: None

In Favor: Ms. Church, Mr. Manno, Mr. McGrail, Mr. Orsini, Ms. Pawlak, Mr. Traver

Opposed: None

Abstained: Mr. Migliarese

MOTION CARRIED (6-0-1)

5. Correspondence

None

6. Economic Development Coordinator's Report

Mr. Seacrist gave a report (attached). A lengthy discussion ensued.

7. New Business

A. Request meeting with Chris Murphy to explore what potential impact President Elect Obama's stimulus package might have on Watertown (i.e., new or expansion of business park, funding to improve downtown areas of Watertown/Oakville, etc.)

Mr. McGrail reported Mr. Frigon spoke to Mr. Murphy twice, and they wanted to get ahead of the curve on the stimulus package, come up with plans to see what projects are needed in Watertown. They are waiting to hear how much Watertown would receive financially.

Mr. Seacrist explained that shovel ready projects are projects that have all plans approved, all design development is done and is only waiting funding, and the project could start in 180 days.

Mr. McGrail reported they were waiting to meet with Chris Murphy so the town can move ahead with some of these projects.

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- B. Letter to Chris Murphy, Joe Lieberman, and Chris Dodd requesting help to settle Post Office issue.

Mr. McGrail reported this ties into 7A, because once Mr. Murphy meets with them they also want to discuss the post office. Perhaps they can give him some history regarding the wait for a new post office.

- C. Quarterly Meeting with Town Council Business Subcommittee.

Mr. McGrail reported he will contact Ray Primini regarding meeting with this Subcommittee. They did this in the past, and it since faded, but he'd like to revive this quarterly meeting. He will report on this at the next meeting.

- D. Meeting with Developers (Re: Industry)

Mr. McGrail reported this was discussed earlier under Public Participation.

- D1. Meet and Greet

Mr. McGrail stated maybe next month we can discuss having another Meet and Greet for the Spring.

- E. Initial Planning for "Out of Business"

Not discussed.

- F. Member Term Expirations – Mr. DiPietro and Mr. Migliarese

Mr. McGrail asked Mr. Migliarese if he wanted to be reappointed; he said yes. They would also like to make John Manno a Regular Member in place of Mr. DiPietro, and then fill his alternate seat.

MOTION: (Mr. Traver, sec. Mr. Migliarese) to add Agenda Item 7G, Drive-Sol.

Discussion: None

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

- G. Drive-Sol

Mr. McGrail reported they received a call yesterday from the Plant Manager of Drive-Sol, who reported Drive-Sol was closing their plant. They gave the State their required 60 day notice. They have 3 major customers, General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford, Chrysler being their largest customer, and they have no business coming in, they are owed a substantial amount of money from the auto industry and they have been furloughing people since April.

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The only light in the tunnel is they hold the patents for a particular piece of this steering column so the auto industry can either reinvent the design and find another supplier, or they can find a buyer for Drive-Sol. This is the only plant that makes steering columns. It comes down to Drive-Sol will probably survive, whether it survives in Watertown is the question. The auto industry can't do without this particular component in their cars easily. It will take 6 to 8 months to buy the rights, etc. Another supplier would have to go through quality checks, etc., another lengthy process.

At the present time they owe Watertown close to \$500,000 in back taxes. \$80,000 of that is a penalty. They were entitled to some tax breaks as long as they did a filing with the State on personal property. As long as they filed this paperwork on time, we would get reimbursed from the State. We are going to meet with Representative Williams and Drive-Sol on Monday to see what's happening (Senator Kane can't make it). A lengthy discussion ensued.

8. Old and Unfinished Business

- A. Update of local company meetings with Senator Kane and Representative Williams.

Mr. McGrail reported this was already discussed earlier this evening.

- B. Update of Griffin School

Mr. McGrail reported he will call Joe Yamin every so often just for an update on what's happening with this property. They want to raze this property and build something new, but right now no one has any money to do anything with this property.

Mr. McGrail reported nothing is happening with the Sealy property either.

- C. Update of Local Business Issues

Mr. McGrail reported there is nothing to report here.

- D. Update of Route 262 Zone Changes

Mr. McGrail reported this is in litigation and will drag on for some time. He didn't think anything can happen until the litigation is resolved. He didn't think an injunction was in place, though.

- E. Update of Land Swap Proposal

Mr. McGrail reported this was already discussed earlier this evening.

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F. Signage for Route 8

Mr. McGrail reported there was nothing to report on this issue. On Watertown Avenue between East Aurora Street and the new street, Easter Seals has a sign, but we can't get a sign for our business park.

G. Update of Watertown Renewable Energy

Mr. McGrail reported this was already discussed earlier this evening.

H. KX Building

Mr. Seacrist asked if anyone knew who owned this building? Right now the Town's \$100,000 on the hook for KX. No one knew who owned this building.

I. Budget

A brief discussion ensued regarding the reduced amount of money the State will be giving Watertown this year. The unemployment rate went up to 6.6% and will keep increasing in Connecticut. The home values went up in Watertown, when home prices went down everywhere else.

9. Adjournment

MOTION: (Ms. Pawlak, sec. Mr. Traver) to Adjourn the Regular Meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Discussion: None

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Regular Meeting Adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph McGrail, Chairman
Watertown Economic Development Commission

Approved: _____
Lynn M. LaForme, Clerk