



**TOWN OF MANSFIELD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
Thursday, September 26, 2013 ■ 5:30 PM
Council Chambers ■ Audrey Beck Municipal Building**

Agenda

Call to Order/Roll Call

Opportunity for Public to Comment

Approval of Minutes

1. June 27, 2013

Reports

- Business activity
- Events
- Chamber of Commerce/Mansfield Business and Professional Association (MBPA)
- Other

Old Business

1. Water Supply EIE
2. Mansfield Tomorrow initiative

New Business

3. Developing an EDC Work Plan
 - Potential items for consideration include:*
 - *Mansfield Tomorrow draft economic development strategies*
 - *Activities similar to those described by Patrick McMahon at the June meeting*

Communications

Adjournment

DRAFT MINUTES
MANSFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Thursday, June 27, 2013
Council Chamber, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building

Members present: Beebe, Bresnahan (5:45), Dorgan (5:51), Fecho (5:47), Ferrigno, Hirschorn, McGuire, Thompson

Staff Present: Matt Hart, Town Manager
Linda Painter, Director of Planning and Development

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Ferrigno.

Public Comment

- No public comment was received.

New Business

- **Role of a Municipal EDC in Connecticut.** Hart introduced Patrick McMahon, the Director of Community and Economic Development for the Town of Suffield. McMahon identified four roles for an EDC: sounding board, advocacy, reconnaissance, and outreach and gave examples of typical activities for each role. He also identified other potential economic development tools such as economic gardening (using Littleton, CO as an example), developing an incentive package, improving the speed and predictability of the local development review process, working with town staff and other committees on infrastructure planning efforts, interfacing with state representatives, and creating a heritage tourism council. After the presentation, members asked about techniques to promote regionalism, identifying areas for preservation and growth, development of a strategic work plan, and metrics. At the conclusion of the presentation, both Hart and McMahon departed.

Approval of Minutes

- March 28, 2013 – Beebe MOVED, Thomas SECONDED approval of the minutes as written. The motion was approved unanimously.

Reports

- **Business Activity.** Painter updated the Commission on recent business activity, including a significant renovation of Starbucks, the opening of The Adventure Park at Storrs, and pending applications at the PZC for the expansion of the Public America gas station and the expansion of the Charles River Labs. Hirschorn mentioned the upcoming closing of JC Penney at Eastbrook Mall and requested that staff reach out to the mall owner to see if there was any way the Commission could be of assistance.
- **Events.** Painter advised the Commission of an invitation from the Coventry EDC for a forum on appropriate infrastructure and septic system design. Dorgan volunteered to represent the EDC at the forum.
- **Other.** Members discussed the need to develop a 1 to 2 year work plan that identifies projects/tasks with the goal of having members volunteer for different tasks. Members also discussed whether they wanted to actively endorse proposed projects. While no consensus was reached, it was noted that if the Commission were interested in endorsing projects, there should be criteria that are used to determine whether an endorsement is appropriate. In the interim, Painter will refer pending PZC applications to the Commission for informational purposes.

Based on vacations and other upcoming meetings, the July regular meeting will be cancelled. No decision was made with regard to August.

Old Business

1. **Water Supply EIE.** Painter updated the Commission on the status of the EIE. A Record of Decision from UConn is expected in early August. Bresnahan noted an upcoming water forum in Windham on June 29th that will be hosted by the League of Women Voters.
2. **Mansfield Tomorrow.** Painter provided an update on recent activities and advised the Commission that another focus group meeting is being scheduled for the end of July; more details to follow.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda M. Painter, AICP
Director of Planning and Development

SUMMARY OF SUFFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Role of Economic Development Commission

- Sounding Board-Provide feedback to staff on policies, programs and initiatives
- Advocacy-Endorsement of specific projects as well as quality of life issues
- Reconnaissance-Serve as extension of town staff (eyes and ears), helping identify potential issues with businesses, vacancies, interested businesses, etc.
- Outreach-Assist with reaching out to local businesses

Suffield Economic Development Activities

- Build Local Businesses
 - Partner with local chamber on events
 - Host Quarterly Breakfasts –invite different businesses and ask for feedback
- Business Recruitment
 - Provide welcome packet for new businesses
 - Conduct annual tour for engineers, architects, commercial realtors, developers, state economic development staff, elected officials (bus tour, lunch, golf-all donated)
 - Join CERC Site Finder
- Entrepreneurship
 - Work with SBDC-partner with workshops on business planning
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Examples of Other Potential Activities

- Development Review Process (Windsor)
 - Speed up local review process-tools include scheduling meetings with all local officials (Windsor completes in 6-8 weeks)
- Tax abatement policy (Windsor)– can be specific and directed
- Infrastructure Planning
 - Try to get to ‘shovel ready land’ in business development districts (water, sewer, roads in place)
 - Tax incentives for developers that install infrastructure
- Interface with State Representatives
- Marketing (Farmington)
 - Social Media (Twitter, Facebook)
 - Economic Development e-newsletter
- Create Heritage Tourism Council (inns, museums, restaurants, convene monthly)

Suffield EDC Work Plan

- Prepares annual EDC work plan (1-2 pages, key initiatives for the year)
- Develops list of 30-40 businesses for outreach/visitations (chosen from different sectors)
- Maintains list of all existing businesses

actors to develop a program or resource), partner, or investor. In general, the community wants to adopt the least costly and resource-intensive role necessary to achieve the desired outcome.

D. POTENTIAL STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS FOR MANSFIELD

1) *Create a more supportive environment for existing and new businesses*

- a) Establish a business retention and expansion (BRE) program
 - i) *Activities.* A BRE program typically should include the following components:
 - (1) develop a list of target businesses, based on size, growth potential, and potential for relocation outside of Mansfield;
 - (2) undertake a visitation program, which may include surveys or structured interviews to assess business status and identify outstanding or potential issues;
 - (3) develop mechanisms to address issues identified in visits, either directly or through referral to other organizations; and
 - (4) follow up to ensure that issues are resolved
 - ii) *Staff and other resource requirements.* This is a labor intensive program that involves use of staff time for one-on-one visits or alternatively, the recruitment of volunteers with knowledge of business (e.g., retired business persons). Protocols for visits, tracking and follow-up will have to be developed to ensure that business needs are identified and effectively addressed, and staff and volunteers will have to receive appropriate training to ensure program effectiveness and consistency.
 - iii) *Organizational responsibilities.* No organization currently undertakes these activities, either locally or regionally. The two regional chambers have not done so in the past and do not appear to have the capacity or interest in playing a lead role. Efforts to establish a regional Economic Development Organization (EDO), most recently through WinCOG, have not been successful and are hampered a lack of a sustainable funding source. The Town could establish a local program, but would have to consider how to staff and manage it. The Economic Development Commission could potentially take a role in visitations and/or recruiting additional volunteers from the community. The regional chambers could be involved in helping to recruit volunteers to conduct business visits. Referral and follow-up would require staff time to establish protocols with business assistance organizations, initiate referrals and conduct follow-up.

- b) Make business regulation more user-friendly
 - i) *Actions.* For businesses seeking to relocate or to make changes in existing space:
 - (1) Provide easily accessible and understandable descriptions of required permits and permitting processes through the town website;
 - (2) Coordinate inspection and permitting activities when different departments within town government are involved, and provide a single point of contact to help applicants navigate the process;
 - (3) Enable applicants to track status of permit applications online;
 - (4) Minimize the need for special permits for minor changes in use through revisions to the zoning code.
 - (5) Review nonconforming business properties for any needed zoning or regulatory changes.
 - (6) Review signage regulations to improve user-friendliness.
 - ii) *Staff and other resource requirements.* No significant additional resources required.
 - iii) *Organizational responsibilities.* Relevant town departments, led by Planning and Development.
- c) Provide information on business assistance resources
 - i) *Actions:* Expand business section of town website to include links page with links to local, regional and state business organizations and business assistance programs, organized by type of organization and with brief descriptions.
 - ii) *Staff and other resource requirements.* No significant additional resource required. Periodic review required to ensure that links are up to date and new organizations and programs are added.
 - iii) *Organizational responsibilities:* Planning and Development

2) Strengthen business recruitment efforts

- a) Establish a regional business marketing program
 - i) *Target businesses.* These could include UConn collaborators (e.g., Tech Park prospects), UConn service providers, economic sectors that are strong and growing regionally, agricultural-related businesses, and businesses providing underrepresented consumer goods and services. Initial efforts should focus on

firms that are well-matched with Mansfield's current commercial property inventory; targeting can be broadened as more specialized facilities (e.g., with lab space) are developed.

ii) Activities.

- (1) Expand business section of town website to include information typically found on highly regarded small town websites (e.g., community profile, user-friendly information on how to locate a business in Mansfield, available site information, business testimonials links to other useful organizations).
- (2) Continue to pursue efforts for collaborative regional marketing with adjacent towns (e.g., application for funding for shared economic development staff with Tolland and Coventry). If funding for formal collaboration cannot be obtained, Mansfield should work with surrounding communities to develop informal and ad hoc collaboration (e.g., cross-referrals of prospects that are not a good fit with the initial contact community).
- (3) Partner with UConn to coordinate marketing to technology firms aligned with UConn's research strengths, including marketing the Tech Park.
- (4) Conduct outreach to commercial property developers who specialize in aligned with the town's marketing and development objectives (e.g., lab space, multi-tenant space for early stage technology firms, historic property restoration relevant to the Depot Campus).
- (5) Engage with DECD to encourage referrals of firms and site selection consultants seeking a location in Connecticut, consistent with local targeting.
- (6) Organize familiarization tours for businesses, site selectors, and commercial property developers who contact the Town about the possibility of locating or developing commercial property in Mansfield. These could involve town officials, real estate professionals, business leaders, and university representatives, as appropriate.
- (7) Develop a menu of state and local incentives to support desirable property development, subject to negotiation with individual developers. These could include:
 - (a) providing local Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) to finance public improvements associated with desirable development projects,

potentially in conjunction with a state TIF for large scale-development projects through Connecticut Innovations;

- (b) fixing the assessment of private development on state property for up to seven years (see CGS 12-65b);
- (c) offering CDBG funding to reduce the development costs of incubators or other multi-tenant facilities;
- (d) working with developers to obtain brownfields remediation funding when necessary, working through the Connecticut Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development, the state's one-stop resource for such funding
- (e) supporting funding applications to Connecticut Innovations' BioScience Facility Fund.

iii) *Staff and other resource requirements.* Local marketing efforts would require increased staff time on the part of Planning and Development or Town Manager's office. This would be reduced if the regional initiative could obtain state funding. Town officials would have to make policy decisions regarding the use of tax incentives.

iv) *Organizational responsibilities.* Town Manager, Planning and Development

3) Increase available commercial and industrial development sites

- a) Explore with UConn the promotion of public-private partnerships to redevelop underutilized state-owned land (e.g., Depot Campus, Burgin Correctional Institution site) for mixed public and private use
 - i) *Target businesses.* Firms graduating from the existing UConn incubator need small scale R&D and office space, often with special fit-up for wet or dry lab space. Yet demand is currently inadequate to stimulate private developers or property owners to develop space involving the additional costs generated by special fit-up requirements. Efforts are required to capture UConn spin-offs in the short-run and, as spin-offs increase in the longer-run, to demonstrate to private developers and property owners the market for R&D space.
 - ii) *Activities.* Establish a joint town-university working group to explore re-use of the Depot Campus and Burgin Correctional Institution for mixed public and private use. This could be modeled after the successful planning process undertaken by the Mansfield Downtown Partnership.

- iii) *Staff and other resource requirements.* Initially, appointment of working group members from town and university; likely to require site analysis and feasibility studies
- iv) *Organizational responsibilities.* Town Manager, relevant university representatives
- b) Revise zoning map and regulations to: 1) rezone suitable areas for appropriately scaled commercial and industrial development, including additional zoning for R&D; and 2) allowing R&D uses in Business, Planned Business and Professional Office zones with special permits to ensure community health and safety and compatibility with surrounding uses. This is in line with zoning procedures in other small Connecticut communities such as Branford and Farmington, which have experienced growth in R&D businesses. (addressed in more detail elsewhere in the plan)
- c) Extend water and sewer service to commercial/industrial zoned land (addressed elsewhere in the plan)
- d) Market sites to commercial/industrial developers and targeted businesses (part of business marketing initiative described above)

4) Retain and attract talent needed by technology and other high-skill businesses

- a) Invest in Mansfield’s education system with cradle to grave programs that help people in Mansfield develop their talents
 - i) *Activities*
 - (1) Explore establishing STEM summer camps
 - (2) Work with UConn to enrich the university’s entrepreneurship program and provide opportunities for high school students
 - (3) Support high quality STEM education in the public schools
- b) Improve quality of life amenities
 - i) *Activities:*
 - (1) Improve walkability/bikeability (addressed elsewhere in the plan)
 - (2) Increase housing choices (addressed elsewhere in the plan)
 - (3) Increase diversity of available consumer goods and services (addressed elsewhere in this section)
- b) Offer a welcoming environment to young professionals, creatives, and entrepreneurs

- i) *Activities:*
 - (1) Organize networking events
 - (2) Promote professional development opportunities through UConn
 - (3) More effectively promote cultural, entertainment, and recreational events (e.g., develop a comprehensive web-based events calendar)
 - (4) Develop more venues and events for showcasing local talent
 - (5) Highlight Mansfield's assets and amenities in UConn alumni publications
 - (6) Recognize accomplishments of residents (e.g., new businesses, professional advancements, honors) through local publications and events
- ii) *Staff and other resource requirements.* Activities can be undertaken by multiple organizations, including the regional chambers of commerce, UConn, WindhamArts, Innovation East, the Connecticut Small Business Development Center, and local media. These activities can be regional as well as local.
- iii) *Organizational responsibilities:* The town's Economic Development Commission should convene key organizations to consider potential activities, develop an agenda, and assess progress. Individual organizations would be responsible for implementing elements of the agenda.

5) Support Economic Diversification

- c) Promote Mansfield as a tourism destination
 - i) *Activities.* Supplement and enhance regional tourism development and marketing activities, with a particular focus on summer tourism:
 - (1) Establish local tourism promotion organization. Other small communities with significant tourism assets have developed their own marketing efforts to supplement regional efforts. A local tourism promotion organization could develop a more effective visitor website, develop visitor packages, organize additional special events, develop theme trails, install wayfinding signage, and operate a visitor information kiosk in Storrs Center. The organization could also consider how to promote the development of additional tourism infrastructure (e.g., more lodging rooms).
 - (2) Collaborate with other towns on the Quiet Corner Committee to develop joint marketing efforts and promote more effective and targeted marketing of northeast Connecticut by Mystic Country.

- (3) Support UConn in developing additional summer adult and youth learning programs, using empty dormitory rooms for lodging. UConn has been expanding summer adult and youth learning programs and is continuing to upgrade residential halls with air conditioning and other enhancements.
 - ii) *Staff and other resource requirements.* Leadership should come from operators of tourism venues, events, and other businesses benefiting from tourism (lodging, food and beverage establishments). The town could play a supportive role, (e.g., writing grant proposals to state or federal funding sources.)
 - iii) *Organizational responsibilities.* Create town tourism promotion organization
- b) Support preservation and expansion of local agriculture
- i) *Activities.* Initiatives to support the development of the agricultural economy will be addressed primarily in another section of the plan. As noted above, agri-tourism activities could be expanded to provide additional income for farmers while encouraging growth in resource-based tourism. Other activities under consideration include developing infrastructure for increased value-added production (e.g., a shared commercial kitchen), increased local distribution of farm products, crop diversification, and refining local regulations to reduce regulatory burdens.
 - c) Focus BRE and business marketing on local and regional growth opportunities (addressed elsewhere in this section)

6) Strengthen Local Economic Development Capacity

- a) Establish Economic Development Director Position within the Office of Planning and Development
 - i) As a whole, these recommendations suggest a significant increase in the Town's economic development activities. Given their extensive other duties, it will be difficult for either the Town Manager or the Director of Planning and Development to play a lead operating role in economic development efforts. Consequently, if practicable, the town should consider creating a half-time Economic Development Director position to assume this role.

Appendix: Composition of Selected Economic Sectors

The economic sectors listed in some of the charts in this report are defined in the North American Industry Classification System for the purposes of government data collection. While the composition of some of these sectors is self-evident (e.g., retail, manufacturing), the composition of others is less clear. The following sectors are described in greater detail to provide readers with a more thorough understanding of their composition:

Information: includes publishing, motion picture and sound recording industries, broadcasting, telecommunications, and data processing, hosting and related services.

Professional and technical services: includes legal services, accounting services, architectural and engineering services, specialized design services, computer systems design and related services, management, scientific and technical consulting services, scientific research and development services, and advertising and public relations services

Administrative and waste services: includes office administrative services, facilities support services, employment services, business support services, travel arrangement and reservation services, investigation and security services, services to building and dwellings, waste collection, and waste treatment and disposal.

Other services except public administration: includes repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, religious grantmaking, civic, professional and similar organizations, and private household services.