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**Seymour Economic Development Commission  
Special Meeting Minutes 7pm  
April 30th, 2020  
Zoom Online Meeting**

Members Present: Mike Marcinek, Bryan Sirowich, Christine Aliman, Karen Robinson, Roxana Findley

Members Absent: Claudia Thomas

Others Present: Rory Burke

**1. Call meeting to Order**

Meeting was called to order at 7:04pm.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

All recited the Pledge.

**3. Approve March Minutes**

**a. Outstanding Items from March Meeting**

Marcinek asked why are they struggling with not seeing Sheila O'Malley (the new EDC Director), because they are losing valuable time, and they are now into May.

Byran Sirowich agreed with Marcinek. Sirowich made a motion to accept the minutes from March.

Karen Robinson seconded the motion.

Mike Marcinek; Abstained.

Motion passes 3-0-1.

The Chair asked for a motion to seat alternate Roxana Findley.

Motion by Brian Sirowich.

Seconded by Mike Marcinek.

Motion passes 3-0.

**4. Comprehensive plan/path for job responsibilities for new EDC director to coincide with Seymour's Strategic Plan**

The Chair said that there has been discussion as to what they are going to have the new EDC director come in and do. She said that the strategic plan is going to be something they can use as a template, which was mentioned in the letter that they had sent. However, the First Selectman is looking for a bit more clarity on how they will incorporate that. Mike Marcinek and Rob VanEggen conversed via email, which the Commission all read.

Karen Robinson said she appreciates Mike's very thorough email. However, she wants to know first and foremost, would her status be an employee or a contractor.

Marcinek said he agrees, but that is the job of the Selectmen.

Robinson said that the role of her being an employee of Ansonia as well as an employee of Seymour, would make certain decisions a lot easier by just know which she would be. In Robsinson's opinion, she prefers that she were just a contractor, because then there is no conflict of interest.

Marcinek agrees.

Robinson said that the question of integrity, that VanEgghen brought up in the email to the Commission, there does not seem to be an easy answer other than to get references other than the First Selectman.

Marcinek said that he is just happy to have someone who has a lot of experience in economic development and that is what he was trying to convey to VanEgghen. Someone working in 2 different communities will always bring up politics, but Economic Development is not about the politics.

Robinson said that she thinks they are all in agreement that she is a contractor and not an employee, and that way there will be no conflict.

Sirowich said he agrees, but as a contractor he does not want the EDC to give her \$5,000 a month without seeing results.

Robinson said the previous director, whom was a contractor, had certain expectations put in place so that they did see those results, and she expects the same would be put in place with this new director.

Roxana Findley asked how many hours a month they would be working.

The Chair said at the Selectman's meeting they discussed 30, 60, or 90 days deliverables that need to be obtained. Those deliverables would be decided between this Commission and the First Selectman. The Selectman talked about the conflict of interest, and they discussed having Deputy Selectman Drugonis and the Town Attorney as Sheila's direct report. Those two would be the ones negotiating pay, hours and that portion of her contract. They would not necessarily be her direct report, they would just negotiate that portion of the contract, and she would still report to EDC. The Chair will double check and send an email.

Marcinek said that if she was an employee, he would understand her having to report to someone in charge at Town Hall, but she is a consultant so there is no reason why they cannot report directly to the EDC.

The Chair also said that they could do an "employment at will" so if they do not see results, they can terminate the contract after a period of time. There is more flexibility with a contractor. The Chair asked if there was something they feel that she should start working on right away, and a goal they could present to the First Selectman.

Marcinek said that the Strategic Plan is great, but they no longer need to reference it in order to move forward with the process of getting the director in place and seeing results.

Roxana Findley asked if a plan of what she wants to do through 2020 is something to give the EDC.

Robinson said yes, she should reference the Strategic Plan and give the plan to the Commission.

Findley mentions that the email from VanEgghen was alarming, and maybe should be looked at before they continue to go further.

Marcinek said that it was alarming but he thinks it is politics and Democrats vs. Republicans and in his opinion he is beyond that, and would just like to get this process moving. The tax incentives that get moving now, won't be seen until 2023. It's a long term investment that they need to see.

Robinson agrees, especially with the virus it is a critical time to help places and get things moving.

Discussion ensued about needing a liaison between TriTown Plaza and the politician's in town.

Robinson made a motion to move this subject before the First Selectman to bring her on board.

Seconded by Marcinek.

The Chair said this Commission needs to supply specific deliverables (what her tasks will be, grant writing,) before it can go to Kurt.

Robinson said from an HR perspective, not to make the deliverables too specific because if they are in writing, and she does not accomplish them, someone who does not want her in this position already, might use it as an opportunity to say she is not obtaining any goals for the Town. She reminds the Commission that they do not want to set her up for failure.

Marcinek said that she is a professional and should be able to handle most of these things. They won't release it to the Selectmen until the EDC and Sheila agree to it and both parties agree they're obtainable goals.

The Chair asked for all goals emailed to her by the next week. Motion to meet again in 2 weeks and put together obtainable goals for the new EDC director, involve Sheila in them, and then send them to the Selectman's Office.

Robinson rescinded her previous motion.

Rory Burke reminded the Commission that they should be careful with emails because of FOI.

Sirowich asked if Rory could email them anything they had on Fred Messor's job title and his duties while he worked here.

**5. Is there any available land that we don't know about that can be converted or is available for immediate development (at fair cost). Can be prepare properly for**

**development? For example, if we are doing a new Community Center how is the existing Community Center repositioned and what do we want it to be?**

Mike Marcinek said that there are properties around town that need to be developed, but there has not been a comprehensive plan put together of where these places are, what needs to be done and who owns it. Haynes is the only part of Town that is not developed, but it's gonna take about 10 years to get finished. Marcinek listed spots in town that are empty with potential for development, and stated that this Commission should have a list of all the properties, and thinking at all times, how they can maximize value. All of the lots with pollution are going to need grant money, so the pros and cons of each site need to be in front of the Commission.

Sirowich agreed and said that at some point they should develop a land inventory, and have it in front of the Commission so that the Town has the ability and funds to clean up the land and make them more attractive to developers.

Marcinek said they need money in the budget to have a basis for economic development. He mentions that the only thing they can do with the downtown area is fix the train station. He suggests bringing it towards the Haynes property, which would increase their value.

Roxana Findley asked how much traffic comes in and out of that train station.

The Chair said that she could probably find the numbers through Amtrack but from her understanding, it's not that used.

Discussion ensued about the land bank inventory & decided to give that to Sheila.

**6. How do we get Tri-Town started?**

Marcinek said that the owner took a big hit, as most developers did during the COVID outbreak, however, he is still willing to look at a long term investment there. He is looking at it as a potential mix-use, which is the most logical thing, but he would like to see the Community Center go adjacent to the property to give him ancillary facility, that he does not have to pay for. For example, there is property that is adjacent to the backside of the property. The Community Center Task Force will be looking at 3 or 4 different parcels of land (Gary Park, Tri Town, Haynes). Marcinek's feeling is to have a sit down negotiation with the owner, about putting 50 million into TriTown, if the Town puts the Community Center in, adjacent to that property. This is a conversation that Sheila could have with the owner. The owner owns the grounds, but leases the land for 99 years. Marcinek says that the theater owns parking rights for 650 cars, and the lease will go into the next 3 years, so that is a major hang up.

Karen Robinson said that back to the draft of the proposal that Shelia submitted, which is going to be a large help. That would be a good thing to revisit.

Roxana Findley says this sounds very helpful and the writing grants seems great, but which grants does she have in mind.

Sirowich said that he calls to mind one grant about improving the lighting downtown.

**7. Housatonic Wire**

The Chair asked what happened with the conversation that Bryan Sirowich had with Housatonic Wire.

Sirowich said that the most recent storage facility developer (603 Storage) has pulled out due to the economic state because of COVID. Rory had forwarded a developer to Alex, but the developer did not have enough money for the property. Alex has had a few other conversations with developers. They paid for a study for a storage facility consultant to come in, and they rated it a B+, which is how they are currently trying to push it. Seymour Lumber was originally asking \$900,000 and now they are asking \$500,000. It does not seem as if there is a lot of traction on both these properties.

Marcinek said that this is why it's good to have money in the economic development budget, because Housatonic wants \$1.3 million and what Seymour Lumber wanted, its way out of contest for the property. This is because Housatonic wants \$1.3 but they also have about a half of million worth of clean up.

Sirowich said the Lumber spot has less than a half of an acre, and the access to the land is just terrible. So it is very hard to sell. The issue with the Housatonic Wire is the owner is only going to work with the town if he benefits significantly from it. This is why with someone like Sheila on board, it can help significantly to get a deal going.

#### **8. What areas of can be developed immediately to increase our tax base?**

The Chair said that Mike Marcinek spoke on this briefly before.

Marcinek said that there are a few small parcels in the Industrial Park, but other than that there is not a lot. The issue is that there are not a lot of businesses coming into town. The town is trying to keep taxes down but it is certainly tough.

Roxana Findley said that EDC should have a one year, five year, and ten year plan in the future.

Marcinek said there are ways to do that, and then do the land bank property, and look at adjacent properties we have, and rezone that land and put that property together for development. The issue is that there is no clean land left.

Findley asked about the list of Brownfield.

Sirowich said that that's part of the land bank list they want, but no he does not have that. They discussed Rooster's Nursery just past the Webster Bank. The Chair said as EDC they should do a ribbon cutting or something, because they have not had anything since opening up.

#### **9. Discussions relative to Zoning regulations that may hinder development. This includes what is allowed where?**

Karen Robinson said that pamphlet they want put together of "How to open a new business in Seymour" and it was an advanced breakdown. Sadie did it in Beacon Falls and it came out great, and it will be something Shelia can work on it when she gets started here.

#### **10. Adjournment**

Motion: Karen Robinson

Seconded: Mike Marcinek

Motion passed 5-0.

**Submitted by:**

**Malia McCool**