

CITY OF WEST LINN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes

April 12, 2018

Call to Order

6:39 Call to order by Gail Holmes.

Members Present

Kazi Ahmed

Jennifer Harmon

Shannen Knight

Russel Williams

Members Absent

Rachael Vidin

Richard Sakelik City Councilor

Staff

John Morgan

Approval of Minutes

Kazi Ahmed and Jennifer Harmon second to approve January 11 and March 15, 2018 minutes approved unanimously as written with correction spelling of Russel's name.

Review of Agenda

Accepted as written.

Old Business

Mixed Use Task Force:

Shannen Knight reported the task force completed its task and nothing has changed from her reporting from the March 15, 2018 EDC meeting. The Mayor thought there would be more done involving the zoning. The Task Force did make recommendation to adding to the commercial and mixed use zones and the definition of small scale manufacturing. These recommendation will now go the Planning Commission and then on to Council. Gail Holmes stated the Task Force said they would be willing to work more on the tasks brought up by the Mayor.

Waterfront Project/WLP Mill Update:

John Morgan reported that we will be meeting with Portland General Electric representatives next week; there has been a turnover of staff at PGE and a lot of the institutional memory has been lost. We have met with the players individually, this will be a group meeting. John did meet with Brian from the Mill last week, nothing much is happening relative to the Mill and it will be two to three more weeks.

The transportation open house was held last week and was very well attended. The economic development piece comes down to the transportation infrastructure. If we can't resolve some of the transportation issues it does not create the capacity to do anything and we will never solve the congestion. There are four options:

- Option one is the no build, the City does nothing and it is all ODOT widening 205, taking out the bridge and on ramp. Talking about a small traffic circle and this option received zero positive comments at the open house. Discussion around the Broadway and Sunset bridges that cross I-205. Looking for better vision and access, A Street also included.
- Option two is signals, which involves doing a classic intersection at the base of the bridge, taking out the gas station and realigning the street. The goes back the Arch Bridge Plan.
- Option three is a roundabout. This could flow really well and was the number one option at the open house. It does not give as good of access into the redevelopment site and things need to be worked out.
- Option four is the dramatic change, it is predicated on trying to discourage people from using WFD. Realigning Willamette Falls Drive to the bottom of the bluff; discussion around traffic circle vs. traffic signals and how it makes it harder to get to Oregon City.

We will now go back and make some detailed modeling and final designs on the best options. ODOT has not weighed in yet. We hope to get to by June or July is the infrastructure, how much is it going to cost, where is the money coming from, and the timing. This is the number one issue for the project. Additional conversation regarding developing, how the GO Bond will influence this, tolling and metering of roads, and ODOT mission to move people and merchandise as compared to Cities wanting to have people linger longer. Hoping to have good draft by Christmas, probably will be pushed back by a month because of delay with major property owners. More work to be done.

Tourism Grants:

John Morgan reported the County has not been awarded anything yet.

Meetings with leasing Agents and Property owners:

Gail Holmes discussed the EDC is waiting to figure out the zoning issue and how long will it take to get through Planning Commission and Council. How can we work together to create a good economic environment in West Linn. Why are rates so high? Shannen Knight started a discussion around how income per-capita drives high rents; also property values. Russel Williams states he does not see any reason we should meet with brokers, it will not make a difference. Talks around big Corporations own a lot of the empty property, can we penalize for empty property; this is an expensive and difficult endeavor to manage. Discussion around how can we work to get these commercial properties filled and what are options for incentives for owners; including taxes, property owner's vs business owner leasing the space. Should we change the sign code for renewals for corporate leasing to gain information? John Morgan will ask other Cities how can local governments influence local vacancy and lease rates.

Business License Software Update:

Gail Holmes and Shannen Knight met with Shane to go over business licensing processing. It looks better than what we had before. Discussion around what questions we want on the processing page; need to wait after more of the system set in place. What information would be helpful for the future on economic development? Let's pull the business survey back out for review and set some objectives and questions for a future meeting. We could create a welcome package for new businesses and to encourage new business to West Linn; we should work with the Chamber on this. The small business resource center and video studio needs to be marketed, how can we accomplish this? Let's look at the webpage and see what can be updated. Russel stated that the Chamber is working on a welcome packet now, can we link to the Chamber on the business license processing. Discussion around the Chamber and them offering 90 days free, this is all Chamber and this is not City business. Let's work together with the Chamber to help their branding.

EDC Strategic Retreat:

The retreat is a great idea but we need to figure out a schedule and how much time do need. How about replacing a regular meeting with a retreat meeting. Retreat will be set on June 14, 2018 from 6:00pm to 9:00pm. Gail will make the arrangements at the 503 restaurant.

New Business

West Linn Chamber Activities:

The chamber had a social media function and they have been no Chamber meeting since, so Russel Williams has nothing to report. They have sold out all the advertisements for the welcome packet, they are doing a folder.

Other items of interest

EDC Members

Kazi Ahmed discussed his observation of a neighborhood association meeting the City's finance director attended to explain finances; what does the City do to increase business so we can get additional tax from business instead of residential. Taxes continue to increase and he does not feel like the EDC strategies enough to get business tax to the City; we need to be more proactive. Gail Holmes mentioned we need to make sure our business land continues to stay zoned as business. Shannen Knight discussed her meeting with Julie Parrish and looking at the City Tualatin and their mode. They educated their citizen and sold them on business. We need to educate the public on developing more business in West Linn to help lower residential taxes. We do not have the land capacity for industrial area like Tualatin, everything will have to rely on zoning. Jennifer Harmon continues to blame Planning, saying the department is adverse to business zoning and all they want to do is residential project as it is the easiest for them. Shannen Knight stated they is not a lot of commercial place to develop, so we should look at Hwy 43 where there is a big disconnect between Bolton and then nothing for two miles. Discussion around thinking outside the box, we need to focus on the waterfront area and come up with the plan.

As we do not have a downtown and we do not have the infrastructure and we need to have an outreach and zoning plan. Robinwood is making some progress but we need a vision on how to connect the commercial areas. We need to attract businesses that people want to come to, and make the City shop-able. Can we make recommendations to Council, yes we can. At the strategic session let's come up with a vision.

Gail Holmes wants to make sure that with Bev Burke's departure from the EDC committee that Council is on top of replacing her. It is on the website and in process.

Gail Holmes emailed Troy about the Blankenship property if WINCO was taking over the property; no this is not the case.

Shannen Knight's also reported on her meeting with Julie Parrish how can we get tourism and bring people in as we have no bus. Julie told her about a bus Mary's Woods was given a grant for to see how many people would use it. No one knows this exists, Richard Sakelik is going to check into if they did use the grant and did a study, so we could see about getting a mini bus to drive around the City to shop at different places. Also ADU's were discussed with Julie Parrish who thought if the City did not want apartment buildings maybe the City could incentivize ADU's. We could meet the low income needs of the community without overburdening the schools as ADU's are typically used for older residents, Historic Willamette they could be used as Airbnb's. The City could look changing setbacks on code.

Kazi Ahmed feels as if the departments are working against each other with different agendas. Example that when Kazi wanted to sell his property the buyer called him and discussed how the City was requiring sidewalks in an area where there are no other sidewalks. Kazi does not believe all areas need sidewalks. John Morgan explained it was decided by Council that future building would require sidewalk in all areas. The committee believes that should be better communication between departments and this started an EDC discussion concerning sidewalks, setbacks, variances, etc. that they believe is stopping some development and might not be what the citizens really want. Let's add this to the June strategic meeting. Code needs to be changed and more citizen involvement at the pre-app level. Changing the code requires a lot of work and can cost a lot of money.

John Morgan will not be available at the next meeting. John Williams's new position as Deputy City Manager was discussed and how this could help with communication between the departments.

Next Meeting

May 10, 2018

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned 8:24 pm.