

**MINUTES
CITY OF WOODSTOCK
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
July 21, 2015**

The regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission of the City of Woodstock was called to order at 8:09 AM on Tuesday, July 21, 2015 by Chairperson Rick Francois in the Council Chambers at Woodstock City Hall, 121 West Calhoun, Woodstock, Illinois. A roll call was taken by Deputy City Clerk Amy Weber.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Rick Francois, John Buckley and Ryan O'Connor.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Craig Hallenstein and Henry Patel.

STAFF PRESENT: Economic Development Coordinator Joe Napolitano, and Deputy City Clerk Amy Weber.

PUBLIC COMMENTS None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ryan O'Connor made a motion to approve the minutes for the June 9, 2015 meeting, Rick Francois seconded, John Buckley abstained and the motion carried.

GENERAL BUSINESS/DISCUSSION

1. Draft Economic Development Plan

J. Napolitano took the commissions suggestions and incorporated them into the plan, creating four initiatives and several strategies under each initiative. The commission discussed measureable items. Tax abatements and enterprise zones were also discussed, including familiarizing John Buckley with how Woodstock is currently using both things to try and attract and retain businesses. J. Napolitano added that talks with the school district on taxes is ongoing and that the city tries to be flexible in tailoring incentives. R. Francois asked that the enterprise zone designation be added to the plan and further research on taxes be done.

The third strategy is to work with state level EDC to see what other communities are doing and to see if there is anything interesting or creative. R. O'Connor asked for more ties to the website for business owners seeking information, since the top six bullet points of the plan are on the city's website.

R. Francois asked J. Napolitano what the city council will do with the plan. J. Napolitano explained they will prioritize and recommend some of the actions in the plan, giving staff further direction. J. Napolitano asked if commission can vote on plan next meeting, so then they can bring it to city council in September. J. Napolitano encouraged commission to look at plan and send questions to him. R. Francois explained to John

Buckley how the Community Survey feedback was incorporated into the plan. R. Francois said it's good to have a final plan and hopefully it can be finalized in August.

2. Continued discussion on Property Tax Rates

J. Napolitano provided the commission with information from McHenry County that looks at areas that have retail and manufacturing. R. Francois encouraged J. Napolitano to look for comparisons outside of McHenry County, perhaps DuPage and Cook Counties or communities like Oakbrook or Belvidere. The commission also asked J. Napolitano for some historical data, including EAV, to compare with other communities. Continued discussions of Woodstock's high tax rates ensued, including who can help with the situation and what tools are available to offset/rebut the "taxes are too high" concerns. J. Napolitano noted that Woodstock has the lowest sales tax in the area, and that he and his team have a script that they use on highlighting Woodstock.

COMMISSION COMMENTS/UPDATES

J. Napolitano stated that Porkies Restaurant on 2245 South Eastwood was given permission to open an exterior beer garden and serve food. J. Napolitano also spoke with representatives from Flow-Con who are looking at purchasing part of the former DB Hess building.

J. Napolitano also commented that they continue to work with downtown business retailers and the first Art Walk on the Square, scheduled every second Friday of the month, was very successful. J. Napolitano added that he updated the downtown directory document and business guide, he has it in a publisher file and he can update, make changes and re post directory information rather than relying on an outside vendor to do the work. He is also printing off brochures that will be ready in a week. Further discussion ensued regarding Hotel/Motel taxes and distribution guidelines.

J. Napolitano also discussed efforts to promote Woodstock and the new advertising campaign that includes Facebook, WBEZ radio station and putting up billboards along expressways into and out of town to Chicago.

Further updates include: Murphy Oil has started construction in the Walmart parking lot; Wolf distribution in Ridgefield is moving to the former Precision Quincy building bringing 100 jobs to Woodstock this fall: Munch is considering moving.

J. Napolitano also noted that he met the previous Wednesday with Crane Construction who are interested in the Golf and Games site on Route 47 to put in 60-80 units of age restricted housing.

J. Napolitano added that they are requesting bids to replace the windows on the Sheriff's House, there are several interested parties in the building and we want to get the building stabilized and in decent shape. Other updates include: Swanky spa closed and Great Lakes Credit Union purchased the building. R. O'Connor asked if there was any update on the proposed winery. J. Napolitano replied that he is working on finding investors to fund it. R. Francois asked about the former Harley Davidson building. J. Napolitano replied that he talked to U Haul about using the old Farm and Fleet portion of the site however they would prefer the space be used for retail. J.

Napolitano added that they have another party interested in using it for storage and carving out some out lots for retail use.

J. Buckley asked about the Read Between the Line's space. J. Napolitano replied that they've reached out to Redmond Shoes to fill the space. J. Napolitano added that we could support another international chain like Starbucks.

R. Francois asked about the recent 2015 Summer in the Park event. J. Napolitano stated that it was muddy but fairly well attended.

ADJOURN

Motion by Ryan O'Connor, second by John Buckley to adjourn to the next regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission on Tuesday, August 11th, 2015 at 8:00AM in the Council Chambers at City Hall. Ayes: Francois, Buckley and O'Conner. Nays: None. Absentees: Craig Hallenstein and Henry Patel. Abstentions: None. Motion Carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:55AM.

Respectfully Submitted

Amy Weber
Deputy City Clerk