

DOWNTOWN DOVER PARTNERSHIP
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES

February 18, 2009

ATTENDANCE: Ami Sebastian-Hauer, Ann Marie Townshend, Bob Berglund, Charlie Rodriguez, Clay Hammond, Diana Welch, Gary Patterson, Gerri Street, Joe McDaniel, Mike Harrington, Paul Lakeman, Tony DePrima, Councilman Reuben Salters, Mayor Carleton Carey

STAFF: Bill Neaton, Beverly Jackson

GUESTS: Ilona Figat, Patti Gauani

There were no changes/additions to the Agenda.

Minutes

Mr. Harrington moved and Mr. McDaniel seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2009 meeting. The motion was unanimously carried.

Financials

Mr. McDaniel reviewed the December financials.

Brainstorming Session

Mr. Street stated that he and Mr. Neaton will develop ten (10) goals with priorities as a draft work plan for the committee. If members have ideas, they should email them to all members of the committee. He noted that historically the Downtown Dover Development Corporation spent money on bricks and mortar. However, the opportunity is available now to co-own/develop properties rather than to just flip them.

Mr. Hammond asked what documents were generated after the strategic planning meeting. Mr. Neaton responded that the output from the strategic planning meeting was used as the basis for developing the templates to be used for the committee work plans.

Mr. DePrima stated that the subcommittees should develop their own work plans/goals and bring them to the full Economic Development Committee for inclusion in the work plan. Mr. Neaton responded that when the subcommittees were created, they were provided with an initial statement of purpose.

Ms. Welch reported that the Recruitment/Retention subcommittee has met and developed both short and long-term goals. These goals include linking 80 percent of downtown corridor businesses with the DDP website. Mr. Hammond noted that the committee wants to conduct some basic data mining to determine what support businesses need to succeed. Projects under discussion include retail success workshops on cash management; and a promotion called "The New Face of Dover." The Recruitment and Retention committee believes the number one problem to be addressed by their committee is the building vacancies.

Mr. Street noted the potential for the DDP to develop the Acme site in conjunction with another major player. He added that this approach represents a cultural shift from the Downtown Dover Development Corporation business model.

Ms. Townshend responded that there needs to be a cultural shift if the Partnership is to have a significant impact. She noted that at a meeting with developers organized by Jim McGinnis, the feedback received indicated a need for the creation of a downtown master plan. Ms. Townshend stated that she sees creating that vision for downtown as a huge priority.

Mr. Street asked if the Partnership is going to recruit direct competition to businesses that are in place. Ms. Welch stated that her committee would like to conduct a survey of visitors at Old Dover Days to ask what three (3) businesses they would like to see in Downtown Dover.

Mr. Hammond stated that there needs to be a planned approach. The committee should have an idea of a tenant mix. Ms. Townshend stated that competition is healthy and housing is needed as part of the plan. Downtown needs more variety, more dining and shopping options.

Mr. Rodriguez noted that Dollar Stores and Pharmacies and other national chains are still looking for sites and many of them prefer locations in downtown shopping districts.

Mr. Harrington moved and Mr. McDaniel seconded the motion to go into Executive Session at 8:00 AM.

Mr. Harrington moved and Councilman Salters seconded the motion to end the Executive Session at 8:45 AM.

Mr. DePrima noted that the subcommittees are the strength of the group. He moved that Mr. Neaton and Ms. Townshend call a meeting with each subcommittee to develop a work plan for consideration by the full committee at its next meeting. Mr. McDaniel seconded the motion.

In the discussion of the motion, Ms. Townshend noted that a Master Plan for the development of the Downtown Dover Partnership sites is required by law if a developer comes in, and the Economic Development Committee's work plan is needed to assist both the committee and the partnership in identifying priorities.

The motion was unanimously carried.

Public Comments

Ms. Welch stated that there are some stores in the downtown district that when you walk into them, they are not appealing. She asked what actions should be taken to assist them in creating a more welcoming shopping environment.

Mr. Street stated that the Property Management subcommittee is thinking about hiring someone who knows the requirements of major retailers and high-end businesses to help in developing a plan for the Acme site. Mr. Rodriguez responded that each tenant has their minimum requirements for site selection.

Mr. Hammond asked if the City or the Partnership has done any analysis of the stimulus legislation. Ms. Townshend responded that the City Council had identified this as a priority at its retreat. Council

requested the city departments explore water and sewer grants and funding for the transit center. There may be about \$13 million in funding available for the transit center. Mr. Neaton stated that Alan Levin, Director of Delaware Economic Development Office, is setting up a meeting with Governor Markell's office regarding the stimulus package.

Mr. McDaniel moved and Mr. Harrington seconded the motion to adjourn.