

Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes

September 23, 2019, 5:00pm - 6:00pm

Chester City Hall, Council Chambers

Call to Order

The Meeting was called to order at 5:45pm due to lack of quorum. Attendance: Councilwoman Angela Douglas (Chair), Councilman Carlos Williams, Mrs. Stephanie Jackson (City Administrator). No members of the public asked to speak.

Economic Development Master Plan Committee

City administrator informed committee that she was scheduling an October 7th meeting as the last brainstorming meeting for the Economic Development Master Plan committee.

Opportunity Zones Prospectus

The committee requested a copy of the grant documents for the Opportunity Zone Prospectus grant. The document will be included in the Economic Development Committee's notebook.

The City Administrator informed the committee that she has asked some of the Economic Development Master Plan Committee members to serve as a community committee for the Prospectus development. The first meeting with Parker Poe is tentatively scheduled for September 30th.

Policy Tools Discussions/Recommendations

Bailey Bill

The committee discussed the Bailey Bill and decided to reach out to the County to see garner interest. We will report if there is indeed interest or not.

Downtown Economic Development Incentives

The committee was tasked to brainstorm on incentive ideas for a comprehensive economic development incentive plan and bring back examples: tax credits, business development grants, marketing/promotion, façade grants, etc.

New Business

Committee Status

Councilman Williams has volunteered to join this committee. Councilwoman Tinker has verbally resigned from the committee. Mr. King is still not permitted to "serve as a Council member" at this time. Council has voted to move forward with an ordinance change to make the Economic Development Committee a standing committee instead of an ad hoc. The vote for the first reading is slated for tonight's council meeting.

Chester's Five Factors

This item was postponed by the committee due to time constraints.

MASC - Hometown Economic Development Grant 2019

City Administrator was assigned by full Council to complete the short grant application. Funds, if granted, will be used to purchase items to beautify and promote tourism downtown: chess tables,

benches, flower pots/urns, etc. Due date is 9/27/2019. City Administrator did not have any requests for assistance with the grant from the committee at this time.

Main Street SC Program Overview

The committee has requested additional information and possibly schedule a visit from Jenny Boulware, the MASC coordinator for the Main Street SC program. Additional information will be provided at the next meeting.

Marketing & Promotion

The committee discussed some deficiencies with the website, connecting with business owners, and community groups. Also discussed was how to better utilize Social Media and taking a regional approach to marketing and promoting events. The City Administrator commented that they were trying to add more to the website, especially pictures and the newsletter. The Chair discussed the need to improve the website for ADA compliance and user-friendliness as well as important content. Due to the time constraint, the committee was asked to gather concerns and ideas for improvements.

AmeriCorps VISTA program

The Chair provided an overview of the AmeriCorps programs and the upcoming changes. The committee is interested in meeting with the current State Program Specialist to possibly prepare a concept paper and application for future positions. Due to the changes in the program, we will report back with the feasibility of moving forward now or if we should wait until the expected changes take place in February 2020.

Committee Announcements

Opportunity Zones Summit - October 10th

During this meeting, there was only mention of the EDC chair attending this Summit on behalf of the City. Councilman Williams said he would check his work schedule. Councilwoman Douglas said she also set up a few meetings with some people who had reached out to her about the Opportunity Zones and may set up a few investment tours.

National Women's Small Business Month - October 2019

Mrs. Brooke Clinton of the Chamber and Councilwoman Douglas were contacted by the Small Business Administration (SBA) after the Rural Strong event at the Gateway. They were asked to help SBA increase its reach in Chester County. Due to a busy summer on all ends, SBA was asked about focusing on women entrepreneurs. So, a tentative event, a Women-Owned Small Business Roundtable, was set for October 17th. Location TBD. It was mentioned that it has become even more important as Mr. Crank from the EDMP Community Committee asked a very poignant question during one of the sessions: "What is the City of Chester doing to reach out to aspiring and small businesses?"

The committee adjourned at 6:20pm.