

Town of Montville
Economic Development Commission
Informational Meeting Minutes for Monday, April 20, 2015
7:00 P.M. – Montville Town Hall - Room 203

Due to lack of a quorum, an informational meeting was held.

Present were Commissioners Karl Butzgy, Marge Gatheral Walter Hewitt, and Jim Toner. Absent was Commissioner John Protz. Also present was Councilor Tom McNally.

Discussion included the issue of blight, which may be keeping businesses from constructing or setting up a business in Town, the Commission's priorities and how to achieve their goals, and the number of members needed to achieve a quorum.

With respect to the blight issue, it was determined that the Commission may create a recommendation revising the current blight ordinance, consult with Building Official Vern Vesey and Town Planner Marcia Vlaun, and present it to the Town Council for final approval.

Discussion ensued regarding the goals and priorities of the Commission so that they can be an effective organization within the community. It was agreed that their priority includes bringing in new businesses, keeping businesses, and helping them grow. It was noted that, while businesses have moved to Montville, in part, due to lower tax rates, many have also been leaving in favor of setting up their business in other towns. It was agreed that more marketing efforts explaining who the Commission is and their availability to help, support, and guide new and existing businesses is needed. While the Commission has made some strides through the inclusion of an insert in the Town's tax bills, material available in the Planning & Zoning and Town Clerk's Offices, updating their information on the Town website, and, more recently, the Business Expo, it was felt that a personal visit to local businesses for their input and to offer any assistance would be most beneficial. Commissioner Toner added that, in the past, he and Lt. Leonard Bunnell personally visited a number of local businesses, asking specific questions, listening to their concerns, and answering any questions they might have. It was agreed that the personal approach would be most effective and recommended personally visiting businesses, starting with the local restaurants, some of who are hurting due to the recent opening of Arooga's Restaurant. It would also be beneficial to speak with those businesses that have left as well as, if possible, are on the brink of closing or moving so they can try to help and prevent them from closing/leaving. The idea of creating an online survey for businesses to respond to questions to help gauge the needs of existing businesses was also introduced. It was suggested that a combination of efforts, including personal visits, personal telephone calls, and distributing a survey to gain the feedback of local businesses may be necessary. While the Commission has made efforts and received positive feedback on their past endeavors, it was also felt that the

Commission has failed to follow-up and gain closure due to internal issues, including their inability to achieve a quorum.

Discussion also ensued regarding the need to open and keep the lines of communication open with the various Town entities as well as with the local businesses, themselves. While Town Council Liaison McNally informs the Town Council of the Commission's happenings during his monthly report at their Monthly Meetings, it may be beneficial for the Commissioners to also attend and speak at the Town Council Meetings and/or invite the Town Council to their meeting(s).

Secretary Butzgy will contact the Town Clerk regarding the rules for achieving a quorum and the Town Assessor for a current list of businesses as well as a list of those businesses who have moved during the past 18 months. Commissioner Hewitt will create and send a press release to the local newspapers and *The Patch* in an effort to encourage residents to volunteer as a member of the Commission. It is hoped that a Special Meeting can be scheduled prior to their next Regular Meeting for the election of officers.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Montville