

Meeting Minutes
Economic Development Committee
Tuesday – August 24, 2010 - 4:30 p.m. - City Council Chambers

Members present: Morack, O’Connell, Romberg, Tate, Schirpke and Steinhorst.

Also present: Mayor Henke, Hager, Sandy Flease, Rita Thiel, and Lee Rousseau.

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Morack at 4:30 p.m. Tate/O’Connell to adopt the agenda. Carried 6-0.
2. An update regarding the North East New London Business Center from Sandy Flease of Century 21 Realty was next on the agenda. Sandy has had a couple of emails asking questions about the North East Business Center. She has been in contact with a company out of Milwaukee that is looking at several options to relocate. She reported that it was good to see some activity in the commercial/industrial real estate area.
3. The Committee next considered the issue of questionable soils conditions in the industrial park. It was the consensus of the Committee to have the Public Works Committee investigate this matter in detail. A determination how the City will proceed to market the property will be made. A decision will have to be made if it is appropriate to develop the higher elevated area of the industrial park for heavy industry. Most likely additional soil testing will have to occur to make this determination. When asked, Sandy said she understood where the City stands regarding this matter and that it is likely that some areas of the industrial park will have to be promoted for “light industry.”
4. Rita Thiel, President of Forward New London reported her group’s progress to the Committee. Forward New London has been active now for three years. It is a group of community volunteers established as a result of the “Envision New London” project. They are a grass roots committee composed of local business owners and community members who are working to promote and expand our downtown economy. They initially started meeting at the Washington Center. Visibility of Forward New London is very important, so they try and have their meetings in the summer at different downtown business locations. They have a good email list and send out agendas to all on the list. They also prepare minutes after each of their meetings and these are sent out and used to keep everyone informed. Communication is the key. The Forward New London group has accomplished a number of community improvements including the following: they established the Wolf River Marketplace that has various vendors sell their wares every Saturday in the summer in the Festival Foods parking lot, the group most recently sponsored the Concert in the Park event with the Neenah Ambassadors in order to attract more people to downtown, they have established two murals on businesses on Pearl Street and are planning another mural to improve the downtown, they worked cooperatively with the City on beautification projects including the flowers on the light poles downtown and the new trash receptacles. They are currently evaluating new benches for downtown. Their work with Ed Wendland got them started and now his work is done. The Forward New London group is now working with the Waupaca County Economic Development Corporation and UW Extension on the

“Hometown Program” to work together cooperatively with all communities in the County to promote all our community events county-wide. We want to not only promote and keep our existing business community healthy, but we also want to attract new business. One of the ways to do that is to cross-market our various community businesses across the entire county. The Hometown Program is trying to get each community to have and promote a unique identity. We in New London need to get on the same page of what we want our “brand” to be. As an example, Manawa is “Rodeo Joe,” Iola is being branded with the Car Show, and Fremont is using a fish called “Freddie Fremont.” Rita is confident that Forward New London is heading in the right direction and asked anyone with an interest in participating in the group to please join in. It was suggested that Forward New London cross market with the golf course as a number of the people that visit the golf course are visitors from throughout the area. When asked if the group could act as mentors to new businesses, Rita said that a number of members of the group are from the banking community and could volunteer their assistance. It was noted that helping home-based businesses grow would be beneficial; it is just a matter of finding these business people and offering them assistance. When asked what can be done to attract new business to our community, it was noted that money plays a significant roll, but other than that, being a genuinely supportive community that is able to communicate our positive climate to the expanding business is the key. Communication and support are the keys to local economic development. The Committee thanked Rita and the Forward New London group for their hard work to better our community.

5. The Committee briefly reviewed the “Envision New London Strategic Plan” that was last evaluated in August of 2008. A number of accomplishments were noted as well as items that still need work. It was suggested that the Committee review the specific goals, objectives and strategies in the plan and consider assigning tasks to accomplish these goals at a future meeting. It was suggested as a result of this discussion that the Committee may want to have the School Superintendent as a speaker at a future meeting.
6. Administrator Hager presented his update memo. Kent had been in touch with four different developers that had received copies of our Request for Proposals to develop the City owned downtown river front property. The developers noted that the current economic conditions are not favorable for the development community to consider undertaking new raw land development at this time. It was noted that there are a lot of development projects out there now that have stalled in their tracks. Given that the holding costs to the City are very low for the City water front property, it is the opinion of the developers that we are best to wait out the current down economy and attempt to find a developer when the economy improves. The Committee will continue to consider the future of the property.
7. Chairman Morack reviewed the Small Business Development Center publication titled “Business Resource Line” where start-up businesses can find answers to many of their questions by simply dialing a “800” number and then press a four digit number for information on thirty topics ranging from permits & licenses, to Federal SBA programs. The program is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and it is free. The program is part of the Small Business Development Center at UW Stevens Point. The number to dial to reach the system is 800-487-7389.

8. The history and current wording on the City billboard out on Highway 45 was reviewed. After considerable discussion it was the consensus of the Committee that the School District be approached with an idea to develop a contest for students to participate in to create a new billboard to advertise our community and attract people into the City. The Committee will review this idea with the School Superintendent.
9. Our guest speaker for the September meeting will be Bobbi Miller from the Fox Valley Workforce Development Board. Bill Fitzpatrick, School Superintendent will be contacted to arrange for him to visit a future Committee meeting. Topics for the next agenda include discussion of the 2011 budget for economic development and consider assigning tasks to accomplish goals that have yet to be accomplished in the Envision New London Strategic Plan.
10. There being no further business to come before the Committee, Tate/Schirpke to adjourn. Passed 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Kent Hager
City Administrator