

City of DeBary
Regular Economic Development Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday
January 20, 2005
7:00 PM

Florence K. Little Town Hall
12 Colomba Road DeBary, Florida 32713

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order** – Vice Chair Donald Kitner
2. **Roll Call**

Present: Joe Canfield, Betty Gigantino, Don Kitner, Leonard Marks, and Tom Smith

Absent: Carol Lawrence, Lita Handy-Peters, and Tracy Good.

Also present: City Manager Maryann Courson, Planning Administrator Anita Gonzalez, Council Member Patrick Fulton, and Former Vice Mayor George Coleman.

3. **Approval of Minutes**
Regular Meeting August 19, 2004

Committee Member Smith moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Committee Member Canfield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Matching Grant Program for Non-conforming Signs to be made Conforming**

Planning Administrator Anita Gonzalez reported that the City Council had requested that the Committee prepare a grant program to assist with the replacement of non-conforming signs; that the grant program would allow a business to apply for a matching grant of up to \$2500; and that the monies are to be applied towards a replacement sign to conform to the code; that the application form before the Committee was previously designed and would need to be updated to apply only to signs and include any time limits and criteria as to how applications will be evaluated; that funding is available through the Opportunity Fund; that noticing the availability of the grant to the businesses is a concern; and that an individual business or property owner would have to upfront the money and receive reimbursement at a later time. The Committee was presented with photos of signs that were non-conforming.

Committee Member Smith asked if the Committee would receive an inventory of the signs that need to be updated and that \$2,500 would not be sufficient to cover the costs of replacing a sign. Planning Administrator Gonzalez stated that, as of April 2004, there were 61 signs on Highway 17-92 between Saxon Boulevard and Benson Junction and that not all signs would be able to be funded in the same year.

City Manager Courson reported that, in the past, the grant program included landscaping and façade improvements. The Council determined that the program has merit for signs; that the program is funded this year; and that four sign applications were funded in the past. Committee Member Smith asked what the incentive would be to spend \$5,000 to \$10,000 to meet a new sign code; that it would be a burden to most small business; and that he is in favor of the program, if it works, to make the improvements.

Committee Member Gigantino suggested an open enrollment period to apply as long as there is money available in the Fund; that some small business owners may have to wait to participate in the program until they can afford to replace a sign or, if the funds are used up in one year, allow the sign owners to reapply the next year.

City Manager Courson stated that a time frame is needed for applications, which will encourage businesses to not procrastinate in applying; that the application cycle can be opened annually; and suggested focusing on “merit” of updating signs.

Committee Member Smith asked Council Member Fulton if the Council would fund all 61 signs at \$2500 if all the sign owners came forward to apply. Council Member Fulton stated that the focus should be on the matching funds available. Committee Member Smith stated that the Committee could proactively contact the business owners to inform them about the program.

Discussion was held regarding the notification of the grant availability, which will indicate the need for new signage to the sign owners, and whether the owners know their signs are non-conforming. City Manager Courson stated that Code Enforcement can identify which signs are non-conforming; that only non-conforming signs would be eligible for the grant program; and that many businesses lease their property and that there is no incentive to improve the signs. It was stated that the City should also contact the landlords.

Planning Administrator Gonzalez stated that the Winn Dixie plaza sign is an example of a non-conforming sign. City Manager Courson stated that the application would have a provision for the approval of the landlord and that the application would be made by the business.

City Manager Courson stated that, last year, letters were sent by Code Enforcement to all non-conforming sign owners and that the list is still available.

The Committee discussed time limits, a first-come, first-serve basis and also discussed approaching the Council for additional funding. City Manager Courson stated that the first grant cycle will be used as a test as to interest and the average cost of replacing signs; that a large number of applications would show that there is an interest; and that the Council can be approached during the budget process for additional funds if necessary.

Former Vice Mayor George Coleman reported the history of the grant program that began in 1998; he feels that once someone takes advantage of the program, other business owners will see the improvement and will want to be involved in the program.

Council Member Smith enquired about the approval process. It was discussed that the application would come to the Committee for approval; that prints of the intended sign should be included to ensure that the sign is a conforming sign; once the approved sign is erected and paid for, the applicant can present documentation for reimbursement. The business owner does not need to expend any funds until prior to the determination that their sign is approved for grant funding.

City Manager Courson stated that, to avoid problems experienced with past grant applications, staff will screen applications prior to forwarding to the Committee, this screen will identify any errors such as incorrect type of sign, placement or size, Staff will work with the applicant to send an appropriate application to the Committee.

Vice Chair Kitner raised the discussion of notification. Planning Administrator Gonzalez suggested posting the information on the City's website, a notice in the next City newsletter, and mailing of written notices to the business owners whose names were extracted from the list of non-conforming signs from Code Enforcement.

Committee Member Gigantino enquired as to length of time for County permitting. City Manager Courson stated that sign contractors who work in this area are familiar with the Code and know what will be approved. Committee Member Smith stated that Orange City issued a sign permit in three weeks and that Volusia County required three months to issue the permit in DeBary. Planning Administrator Gonzalez stated that what is being sought for the grant application is zoning clearance and not the actual building permit, that the zoning review should only take a day or two. City Manager Courson stated that, if there were problems, she would be able to contact the County to facilitate the reviews in a reasonable amount of time.

Committee Member Smith moved that the City implement the matching grant program for non-conforming signs with an open application period for 90 days with immediate written notification to all non-conforming sign owners and tenants in the City. Committee Member Gigantino seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

5. Other Business

Vice Chair Kitner enquired if everyone received a copy of the Strategic Plan that was developed a year ago and would the Committee review the Strategic Plan before the next Committee meeting, especially Sections 5 and 6.

Committee Member Smith asked if anyone knows of available office space in DeBary. He hoped that the Committee will try to solicit new business for the City; that Orange City is growing quickly; that DeBary needs to be open to new business for the tax support of the City.

Committee Member Smith enquired as to why Springview Industrial Park has so many empty lots. Planning Administrator Gonzalez noted that she has reviewed many site plans for the Springview Industrial Park property and that it is a “hot” property, with a good deal of activity within the industrial park. What she does not see in DeBary is available office space and stated that a general contractor from Mt. Dora is interested in relocating here. She suggested that a previous participant in the Opportunity Fund project be a mentor to new businesses. Vice Chair Kitner stated that he would talk to other businesses about the process; that he does encourage other businesses to come to this area; and that an inventory of what is available to offer to new businesses would be helpful. Committee Member Smith asked the Committee to review Volusia County’s economic development website; that there is too much interest in West Volusia County for DeBary to be left out; that this area is growing very quickly; and that the perception is that it is difficult to start a business in DeBary.

Vice Chair Kitner stated that he has had to call City Manager Courson many times to get requests through the County and that the County is a stumbling block. Committee Member Smith agreed and stated that businesses are paying higher prices for acreage outside the City rather than being delayed in opening their project due to the County process. He noted that he has a property, which is half in Orange City and half in DeBary and that the Orange City portion is up and going, while there has been a nine-month delay with the County for the DeBary half.

City Manager Courson stated that Planning Administrator Gonzalez had developed a list of vacant Highway 17-92 properties at the time the City was identifying potential areas for a new City Hall; that it took weeks to identify the properties, and that there is little vacant land available in DeBary. Committee Member Smith suggested that land along Highway 17-92 such as the Tillis property, the F.O.E. property and the Rumors’ property be pursued for City Hall use; that would be the perfect place for a new City Hall; and that these places were on the market over the last two years.

City Manager Courson stated that appointments for the Committee are coming before the City Council in February and that Committee Members need to call the Council Member who appointed them and state their interest in being re-appointed.

6. Adjournment The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

**APPROVED February 17, 2005
CITY OF DeBARY
Economic Development Advisory Committee**

Donald Kitner, Vice Chair