

City of Winsted
Downtown Vibrancy Commission
Winsted City Hall – Lewis Room
Tuesday, February 9, 2016
3:30 p.m.

Downtown Vibrancy Commission Members Present: Ms. Nancy Fasching
Mr. Chip Guggemos
Mr. Robert Hamilton
Ms. Tami Rosenthal
Mr. Joe Swanson

Staff Present: Mr. Dan Tienter, City Administrator
Mayor Steve Stotko, City Council Liaison
Ms. Amanda Zeidler, Utility Billing & Payroll Clerk

1) Call the Meeting to Order

Ms. Nancy Fasching, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

2) Approval of Minutes

a) November 10, 2015

Mr. Joe Swanson made a motion to approve the minutes of the Downtown Vibrancy Commission on November 10, 2015. Mr. Hamilton seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

b) January 12, 2016

Mr. Joe Swanson made a motion to approve the minutes of the Downtown Vibrancy Commission on January 12, 2016. Mr. Hamilton seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

4) Old Business

Mr. Chip Guggemos requested an update regarding the Downtown Forgivable Loan Program and progress made on any incomplete projects. Mr. Tienter reviewed the objectives of the forgivable loan agreement and added that he would follow-up on the progress of the projects and agreements.

5) New Business

a) 2016 City Council Priorities

Mr. Dan Tienter stated that on January 28, 2016, the City Council met for their annual Goal Setting Retreat. At the retreat, they arrived at several City Council priorities, which are goals for the upcoming year for City Staff, consultants, City Council itself, and advisory committees to direct its efforts for the upcoming year. Mr. Tienter distributed a copy of the 2016 City Council Priorities. Mr. Tienter stated that staff and consultants walked through each project individually, and then ranked each project. He described the process of utilizing the priority list and how priorities will be accomplished.

Mr. Tienter stated that priority number five (5) on the list is to “Sunset the Downtown Vibrancy Commission and reactivate the Economic Development Authority (EDA).” He stated that after reviewing the plan for the Downtown Vibrancy Commission, one of the recommendations was to spin it off into its own organization. The new model would still be an organization under the City; however, creating the EDA model, per Minnesota state law, enjoys many more powers and statutory authorities that an advisory committee like the Downtown Vibrancy Commission simply doesn’t have. In essence, what the City would attempt to do through an EDA is arm the City’s economic development efforts with more powers and authorities, as authorized under Minnesota State Law.

Mr. Tienter distributed an Economic Development Authority Handbook, which was created by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The Downtown Vibrancy Commission reviewed the powers and authorities of an EDA, as well as the prospective functions and parameters in the City of Winsted.

Mr. Tienter stated that an EDA is a very typical entity for a city in the state of Minnesota to have and to operate most, if not all, of its economic development efforts through. Mr. Tienter stated that the plan is to sunset the Downtown Vibrancy Commission and transition it to a more active EDA.

Advantages:

- Allows the City to access the full range of statutory authorities and powers for economic development.
- Allows the City to consider the economic development vision of the entire community as opposed to one particular area.
- Consistent with the recommendations of the Downtown Vibrancy Taskforce Report

Disadvantages:

- Labor and time intensive: most EDAs hire regular full-time staff to support these efforts
- Relaxes economic development focus on the downtown area

Mr. Tienter stated that the scope of the group would be expanded to include all economic development efforts of the City, not just the two (2) downtown corridors. He added that at this time, the City would not hire any additional staff for economic development purposes; however, a significant portion of his time is dedicated to economic development purposes. There could be a request for additional staff in the future, but the City Council does not have an interest in hiring additional staff at this time. Mr. Guggemos asked if there is any grant money available to cover the cost of staff and overhead used for this purpose. Mr. Tienter stated that there are grants available to EDA's. Depending on the individual grant program, staff and indirect costs may be available for reimbursement, but it depends on the nature of the grant and the requirements.

Mr. Tienter reviewed the financial powers that can be delegated to an EDA. He stated that he has spoken with the City's financial advisors, and they are very comfortable with providing everything necessary to effect the financial powers of an EDA.

Mr. Guggemos asked if there are any learning tools available for an EDA member. Mr. Tienter stated that there are several tools and references available. Ms. Fasching and Mr. Tienter stated that there are conferences and meetings for professionals and commissions, as well as webinars and other resources. Mr. Tienter added that the City is in a great position to learn from what other cities and conferences have to offer.

Mr. Tienter stated that the goal of transitioning the Downtown Vibrancy Commission to an EDA is to arm the City with more powers and authority to accomplish the vision of the Downtown Vibrancy Task Force, and also other economic development goals that are currently under foot. Mr. Tienter stated that what is envisioned moving forward is that the City Council would authorize an enabling resolution and then appoint up to seven (7) commission members, two (2) of which have to be City Council Members. The goal is not to water down or redirect the goals of the Downtown Vibrancy Commission.

Mr. Guggemos asked if there are any other meeting rules that apply to an EDA. Mr. Tienter stated that as an advisory commission, the EDA is still subject to open-meeting law requirements, Minnesota Data Practices Act, as well as taking minutes and making motions.

Mr. Hamilton stated that the timing of this transition is terrific. He added that it is an enabling tool to create a vision and empower the group with the ability to research and prepare a recommendation for the downtown and the entire community, as well as creating credibility with the State of Minnesota.

Ms. Fasching inquired regarding the things that the Downtown Vibrancy Commission has discussed budgeting for the current year. Mr. Tienter stated that the Downtown Vibrancy Commission can continue to meet until a time that the City Council makes a formal action through resolution to dissolve the Downtown Vibrancy Commission and authorize the appointment of an EDA. Mr. Tienter reviewed the proposed timeline with the Downtown Vibrancy Commission. He added that the City Council is planning to approve an updated Comprehensive Plan that will dovetail nicely with the EDA coming online. This is envisioned to make sure that the EDA and the City are on the same page with the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Tienter stated that the vision ultimately is to be a proactive body and set guidance and strategies for what development ought to look like for the City of Winsted.

The Downtown Vibrancy Commission discussed the potential time commitments and duties of the EDA positions. Ms. Fasching requested a job description which details the time expectations and duties so everyone is aware of what the commitment will be. Ms. Fasching also requested information regarding EDA's in communities that are similar in size to Winsted. Mr. Tienter stated that he is happy to compile a list of items that are covered by active EDAs in a town the same size as Winsted – a list of regional communities with some of their more prominent programming as well as what their boards are comprised of.

6) No Announcements.

7) Adjournment

Mr. Guggemos made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Rosenthal seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 9, 2016.

Dan Tienter

Dan Tienter,
City Administrator
City of Winsted

ATTEST:

Amanda J. Zeidler

Amanda J. Zeidler,
Utility Billing & Payroll Clerk
City of Winsted