



DRAFT MINUTES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING January 27, 2010, 7:30 a.m. San Tan Conference Room

1. Call to order

Present:

Vice Mayor Mortensen	Town of Queen Creek
Council Member Barnes	Town of Queen Creek
John Schroeder, Chairman	CGCC, Williams Campus
Jean Humphries	Arizona State University Polytechnic
Lee Ester	SRP
Jason Barney	Land Developer
Rustyn Sherer, Vice Chairman	Queen Creek Chamber of Commerce
David Valenzuela	Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport
Roseann Sweet	Queen Creek Resident
Steve Sossaman	Queen Creek Resident
Doreen Cott	Town of Queen Creek
Kim Moyers	Town of Queen Creek
Wayne Balmer	Town of Queen Creek

The meeting was called to order at 7:37 a.m.

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Items for Discussion:

A. Consideration and possible approval of the October 28, 2009 minutes.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Sossaman, seconded by Commissioner Sherer to approve the minutes dated October 28, 2009. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Vice Chairman Sherer commented that the minutes dated October 28, 2009 were very extensive and well done.

B. Discussion and possible action on prioritizing or revising items within the Commission's approved Work Program for FY09-10.

Chairman Schroeder emphasized that there has been significant progress on several items of the work plan.

- The Commission has reviewed the General Plan Amendments but will have the opportunity to review GP09-58/RZ09-60 and make a recommendation on the modifications in March.

- The S.W.O.T. Analysis ties in closely with items 3 and 8 in the Work Program – drill down of at least two of the targeted sectors and review Mesa’s Strategic Plan, and Pinal County developments.

Doreen Cott, Economic Development Director, stated that the department’s action plan includes an objective to research the opportunities and challenges associated with a small business incubator. Staff has applied for a \$10,000 matching grant through the Arizona Department of Commerce – Rural Economic Development and Planning Grant. If awarded the grant money would need to be used by June 30, 2010. Staff will keep the Commission apprised on this issue.

Kim Moyers, Management Assistant stated that she and Ms. Cott will be touring an incubator in Tempe, Club E, this week.

Council Member Barnes stated that “My Brother’s Business” is another incubator. This business rents out space to small, start-up business and provides staff and equipment.

Commissioner Barney stated that there is a virtual incubator located in Gilbert. The incubator provides assistance with legal and professional services, corporate and brand formation and other services such as networking.

Vice Mayor Mortensen commented that between 80-85% of businesses consist of small business ventures. Therefore, grant money to research an incubator is a good beginning.

Council Member Barnes stated that small businesses need to get out of their houses and into commercial space. The Town does not receive any taxes from most home based business. Encouraging these businesses to become Chamber of Commerce members is also important.

Item #5 on the work plan is to formalize the program that was used to facilitate Queen Creek Marketplace and Cornerstone Projects. Chairman Schroeder noted that construction has slowed and now is a good time to look at this process and how it can be implemented with other projects.

Chairman Schroeder discussed item #2 on the Work Plan which is to consider amending the Economic Development Strategic Plan to include a sustainability philosophy across all of the targeted sectors or evaluate adding “sustainable industries” as a new targeted sector. Chairman Schroeder stated that this is an issue for the entire Town and the Town Council may want to provide some direction. Vice Mayor Mortensen indicated that this item is one of the elements of the Corporate Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Humphries indicated that the Town has a sustainability philosophy and it is reflected through its new municipal buildings. Commissioner Humphries asked if the Town has construction guidelines or criteria for businesses. Commissioner Sossaman indicated that the Town has home builders using Green Build strategies and likes the idea of fast tracking these projects.

Vice Mayor wanted to punctuate that he would like to see a fast track concept put together and identify who would be on the panel.

Chairman Schroeder suggested breaking up into small teams to accomplish the items on the work plan. He would like to see a sign-up sheet for each of the items with staff coordinating the efforts.

Ms. Cott indicated that the Chamber is interviewing several businesses each month as part of the Business Retention and Expansion program and has received feedback on the permitting process.

Wayne Balmer, Planning Manager stated that the Council is currently evaluating a fast track issue. Residential developers are looking to build smaller homes.

In reference to Item #6 on the Work Plan, Ms. Cott explained that a promotional event is being planned at Horseshoe Park and Equestrian Centre (HPEC) in March 2011. There will be a VIP component to this event allowing Economic Development to showcase the community and its assets.

Commissioner Barney asked if there is a sub-committee for the VIP event. Ms. Cott confirmed that there will be a sub-committee developed as the promotional committee continues to move forward. Commissioner Barney volunteered to be on the committee.

Vice Mayor Mortensen added that on April 17, 2010 "Roots 'N Boots", a family rodeo, will be held at HPEC. The event will begin at 8:00 a.m. and is designed for families.

It is being considered to combine the Roots 'N Boots family rodeo with the Promotional Event to create one Town signature event.

Chairman Schroeder indicated that the commission is making progress on all the items on the work plan and in turn, was very impressed.

C. Update and discussion on the S.W.O.T exercise conducted on the Town's main employment areas.

Kim Moyers, Management Assistant stated that one of the Economic Development Action Plan items was to coordinate a detailed SWOT analysis of the Town's two main employment areas. There were a series of four meetings held between October and December 2009. The first meeting identified 5-year Capital Improvement Projects, infrastructure needs in each area and potential costs involved. The second meeting was held with external attendees who consisted of representatives from the Economic Development Commission, Town staff, Queen Creek developers, Pinal County, Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, Mesa Economic Development and Land Advisors. The third meeting, facilitated by GPEC representatives began the S.W.O.T. analysis specifically for the northern and southeast areas of the Town. The fourth meeting was held to discuss the next steps and implementation ideas from the information gathered from the S.W.O.T.

Ms. Moyers indicated some of the strengths of the Northern Tier include Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, future SR802 freeway and Gaylord/DMB Projects. Some of the weaknesses included shortage of funding for the freeway, lack of infrastructure and the slow recovery forecast of new development. Southeast corner strengths/opportunities include synergy created the Agra-tainment businesses (the Olive Mill, Schnepf Farms and the Pork Shop), and Banner Ironwood Medical Center. Weaknesses/threats in the Southeast Corner include the future elevated railroad crossing and cost of construction, lack of sewer and infrastructure in the area.

Conclusion identified very specific needs such as infrastructure and funding, an updated sewer master plan to identify short, middle and long term needs. Thoughts for consideration include how to finance the needed infrastructure, phase in development or accomplish all at once and should targeted sectors be considered when choosing the level of infrastructure needed in each area?

Vice Mayor Mortensen asked whether industrial development in the core of Queen Creek was considered. Ms. Cott indicated that the S.W.O.T. did not cover the Town Center area.

Commissioner Barney indicated that the focus should be on creating higher wage jobs not just retail jobs. With infrastructure already in place within Town Center, there is opportunity to compete in the marketplace.

Ms. Moyers indicated that as part of GPEC, Queen Creek responds to approximately 1 out of 10 leads due to lack of infrastructure.

Commissioner Valenzuela stated that with Queen Creek's projected build-out at approximately a 100,000, the Town should look at different retail models.

Commissioner Barney stated the need to figure out what land use and infrastructure would be required to compete with other communities.

Ms. Cott stated that the Town Center Committee has been working on updates to Town Center and will provide the EDC with updates at the next meeting. The committee has made recommendations for land use and boundary changes within the Town Center.

Mr. Balmer indicated Town Center recommended changing land use from single family residential in some areas to mixed use.

Commissioner Barney indicated that he has viewed Town Center as a predominant retail area. Job growth in Town Center will spur job growth in other employment corridors.

Vice Mayor Mortensen stated that the work that the Town Center Committee has done is worth discussing at a future EDC meeting. The Town Center Committee's views are based on aesthetics and land use. Vice Mayor Mortensen believes that we should focus effort in the Town Center as this is where the Town's immediate return will be.

Commissioner Barney agreed with Vice Mayor Mortensen's statements. Success and growth in Town Center will spur success and growth in other areas.

Commissioner Barney suggested to begin with the land use and evaluate total square footage of office, flex and industrial space then evaluate how we can compete in the marketplace and respond to GPEC leads.

Commissioner Sweet has been involved in the town for 15 years and the vision of Town Center was similar to what has developed at the San Tan Marketplace -sufficient parking and pedestrian friendly walking areas to shopping and restaurants. There are some retail stores and eating establishments located in Town Center that are hard to find due to lack of visibility.

Commissioner Sossaman emphasized that we need to learn from other cities and towns.

Ms. Cott would like to have the Commission develop an action plan with a financial component. This item will be brought back for additional discussion.

Commissioner Ester would like to see bringing the reclaimed water back in to Town.

D. Discussion on Home Rule – Patrick Flynn, Assistant Town Manager

Patrick Flynn, Assistant Town Manager gave an explanation of the Home Rule which is local control of the Town finances opposed to state control of the Town's finances. This is the third renewal and if approved will last for four years. Including Home Rule on the ballot is a requirement of the State and will be seen on the March 9th ballot. If Home Rule is not renewed, Queen Creek would be governed by a state spending formula that was established 30 years ago; this would have significant impacts to the Town.

The voter's are being educated by Town Staff, Council Members, the fire union who is advocating it, members of the Chamber, pamphlets, etc.

Commissioner Barney wanted to know if anyone legitimately opposes the Home Rule. Mr. Flynn replied that there is some information on the blogs that indicate that some people may not fully understand it. The Town has been reaching out and working to educate residents on the importance of this issue.

Mr. Flynn emphasized that this is not a tax increase but simply the ability for the Town to spend the Town's money. If Home Rule is not renewed the money would accumulate in the bank and could not be touched for two years.

Council Member Barnes asked which Arizona communities do not have local control of their finances and if it was possible to show the way that these communities look and operate. Mr. Flynn stated he could do some research.

E. Summary of current events – Reports from Chair, Commission Members and Economic Development Staff.

Vice Mayor Mortensen informed the commission members that the Town Council meeting on January 20th ended at 1:30 a.m. and the main issue on the table was the request from developers that are buying sub-divisions the ability to build smaller homes. Three of the requests were approved, with adjustments. The Council is seeing a new wave of challenging requests and developers want to move quickly.

Vice Mayor Mortensen stated that Council approved Solid Waste pickup after a 2.5 year process. This program will go into effect in September. Solid Waste will be an enterprise fund and paid for by a fee from residents.

Vice Mayor Mortensen reiterated that the Family Rodeo will be held at HPEC on April 17, 2010.

Commissioner Ester indicated that the Queen Creek Water Utility Department and SRP will be holding a sustainability event on March 13th from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. focused on water conservation. SRP will provide solar information during this event.

Vice Mayor Mortensen stated that the SRP Able Moody Line has been approved. SRP will be putting up a nice fence and substation.

Commissioner Sherer stated that there will be a Candidate Forum at the Library from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. January 27th.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2010.

3. Announcements

Ms. Cott indicated that there will be a Town Center Committee update at the next meeting. Also, a representative from Communications and Marketing will be attending to share information on the branding initiative.

Ms. Moyers stated that there will be an open house to receive public input on the Town Center Committee updates held on February 8th from 5:00 -7:00 p.m. at the library.

4. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 a.m.

/jk