



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
February 24, 2010, 7:30 a.m.
San Tan Conference Room

1. Call to order

Present:

Vice Mayor Mortensen	Town of Queen Creek
John Schroeder, Chairman	CGCC, Williams Campus
Rustyn Sherer, Vice Chairman	Queen Creek Chamber of Commerce
Jean Humphries	Arizona State University Polytechnic
Lee Ester	SRP
Jason Barney	Land Developer
Carson Brown	W Holdings
Mark Schnepf	Schnepf Farms
Roseann Sweet	Queen Creek Resident
Steve Sossaman	Queen Creek Resident
Kim Moyers	Town of Queen Creek
Wayne Balmer	Town of Queen Creek

Absent:

Council Member Barnes	Town of Queen Creek
Doreen Cott	Town of Queen Creek
David Valenzuela	Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport
Dr. James Murlless	Queen Creek Unified School District

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 a.m.

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Items for Discussion:

A. Consideration and possible approval of the January 27, 2010 minutes.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Humphries and seconded by Commissioner Sweet to approve the minutes dated January 27, 2010 with a minor change under item **E. Summary of Current Events**. Commissioner Ester stated that the sustainability event on March 13th will be from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

B. Discussion on the Town's branding initiative

Vice Mayor Mortensen stated that a branding concept for the Town was approved by the Town Council; "Convenience of the City and Comfort of the Country". There will be a variety of pictures and designs that convey this concept and will be used in all future marketing materials. Economic Development Management Assistant Kim Moyers stated that marketing will be tailored for various departments and taglines developed for each in the upcoming months.

C. Discussion and possible action on the Town Center Committee's recommended updates to the Town Center and Redevelopment Area Plans

Economic Development Management Assistant Kim Moyers gave a presentation on the Town Center Plan Update asking the committee to hear the suggested recommendations from the Town Center Committee (TCC) this month with an opportunity for the EDC to make a formal recommendation at the next Commission meeting (March 24). The recommendations made by the Town Center Committee will be taken Town Council on April 7, 2010.

Ms. Moyers indicated that the Town Center Committee (TCC) began meeting in February 2009 to recommend updates to the 2005 Town Center Plan. The committee recommended changes to the Town Center boundaries; land use changes and decorative element for the Town Center. Ms. Moyers explained the suggested boundary changes to the Commission.

The TCC also proposed a new Mixed Use land use category for the Town Center. This definition states "each use (office, commercial or residential) can occupy up to 50% of the total project, but the combination of two of the three cannot exceed 75%".

Chairman Schroeder emphasized that mixed use has to include all three components; office, commercial and residential in the formula.

Ms. Moyers said that the TCC wanted to provide guidelines for developers understanding that all proposals would go to Council for final approval.

Planning Manager, Wayne Balmer arrived at 7:50 a.m.

Commissioner Sossaman asked if this formula has gone through any type of financial analysis. Ms. Moyers said the committee did not use any economic impact tools when determining the formula.

Commissioner Sossaman asked if this combination is used anywhere else in the valley. Planning Manager, Wayne Balmer stated that it is not. Commissioner Sossaman suggested that this formula may crimp creativity.

Vice Mayor Mortensen stated that this formula will be reviewed by the Planning & Zoning Commission before reaching the Town Council.

Mr. Balmer indicated that there are two properties that this applies to, a small piece of land along Northern Ellsworth Road (the triangle piece separately Ellsworth Loop Road and Ellsworth Road) and a larger underdeveloped piece along Ocotillo.

Mr. Balmer explained that the Town has a mixed use definition; however this definition is specific to the Town Center.

Ms. Moyers indicated that the definition was meant as a suggested guideline. The committee's intent with the definition was not meant to be too harsh or limiting to developers.

Commissioner Sossaman emphasized that the definition could be discouraging to new businesses coming in to Town. Ms. Moyers will bring concerns back to the TCC with the Commission's suggestion to loosen the word structure.

Chairman Schroeder asked if the formula is 50% of the total project acreage or total square foot of project. Ms. Moyers stated it was the total project.

The commission members suggested changing “commercial” to “retail” and “residential” versus “non-residential”.

Ms. Moyers will take the comments back to the Town Center Committee for discussion.

Ms. Moyers continued with the presentation on Town Center updates highlighting the decorative elements proposed by the TCC for the Town Center:

- Polywood benches and trash cans
- Decorative street lights in specified areas
- Decorative traffic signals

Commissioner Humphries left the meeting at 8:15 a.m.

Vice Chairman Sherer asked if the Town will still have the ability to hang banners for special events. Ms. Moyers said yes, banners will still be able to be hung.

The timeline for the Town Center Recommendations is as follows:

- February 8 – Open House
- February 10 – Planning and Zoning – Work Study
- February 23 – Town Center Committee
- February 24 – Economic Development Commission
- March 10 – Planning and Zoning – Regular Session
- March 23 – Town Center Committee Meeting
- March 24 – Economic Development Commission
- April 7 – Town Council

Commissioner Sossaman indicated that signage is needed to help small businesses.

Vice Mayor Mortensen emphasized that businesses have 90 days instead of 60 days to display banners with the new sign ordinance recently adopted by Council.

Commissioner Ester asked about decorative street features. Ms. Moyers replied that the original plan is for an inlay at the Ellsworth and Ocotillo intersection as well as meandering sidewalks throughout the Town Center.

D. Discussion on the Town Center Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (S.W.O.T.)

Ms. Moyers gave a presentation on the Town Center S.W.O.T. Analysis.

Strengths consisted of:

- Center of the community
- Utilities and infrastructure are in place
- Municipal facilities in Town Center
- Convenience
- Continued residential growth in Queen Creek and the surrounding area

Weaknesses include:

- Lack of East/West road access
- Lack of signage
- Increased sales tax
- Lack of night life, activities and destination spots
- Retail lease rates are high

Opportunities include:

- Public transit
- Queen Creek is still in early stages as a community
- .25% Town Center fund to help assist programs and beautification projects
- Higher density in Town Center

Threats include:

- Home rule/state legislation
- Economy /foreclosures
- Lack of Town funding for improvements

Commissioner Barney asked if fiber is currently installed within Town Center. It was stated that it is along the rail road track only. Fiber conduit was installed along Ellsworth Loop Road at time of construction.

Chairman Schroeder indicated that fiber access would be crucial for online support to businesses.

Mr. Balmer indicated that there is approximately 2 million sq. ft. of retail in Queen Creek.

Commissioner Barney indicated many amenities are in Town Center and should be a catalyst for other opportunities.

Ms. Moyers stated that the short term goal is to assist small businesses, such as home based businesses, within the Town.

E. Discussion and possible action on the S.W.O.T. exercise and recommendation to Town Council on next steps.

Ms. Moyers requested the Commission consider the following:

- Types of creative financing available to construct infrastructure
- Phase in projects or accomplish all at once
- Should one area be considered over another area
- Targeted sectors be a consideration in level of infrastructure needed to each area

Ms. Moyers also stated the SWOT brought out a strong need for an updated sewer master plan.

Short terms goals for consideration:

- Develop business attraction program specific to medical and healthcare related businesses
- Develop programs and/or grow new and small business
- Special Improvement District in Northern Tier and/or Southeast Corner

A long term goal for consideration includes a Bond Election to fund critical infrastructure needed in the Town.

Commissioner Sossaman favors the idea of focusing on downtown. The area has amenities, esthetics and available space along with existing infrastructure.

Chairman Schroeder stated that the development of downtown will attract others to Queen Creek including our two main employment areas.

Commissioner Sossaman emphasized that East Valley residential will be the hot topic in the future. Retail will respond to this, thus creating opportunity.

Commissioner Barney suggests that a long term goal should be regional employment opportunities.

Vice Chairman Sherer added that the quality of life is directly related to employment and determines growth of communities.

Vice Mayor Mortensen stressed that the Banner Hospital will have offshoot businesses.

Mr. Balmer informed the group that the Gaylord Project is slated to begin in 2014 or longer depending on when the market recovers.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Sossaman and seconded by Commissioner Barney to recommend to Town Council the continued effort to update the Master Sewer Plan and to continue with the analysis of the downtown area and employment opportunities. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote. Vice Mayor Mortensen abstained from the motion.

F. Summary of current events-Reports from Chair, Commission Members and Economic Development Staff.

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

Vice Chairman Sherer informed the commission that the Duane Ellsworth American Legion Post 129 Extravaganza will be held at HPEC on March 12th and 13th. This event will be hosted by the American Legion Post 129.

3. Announcements

None

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Passed and approved on _____

John Schroeder, Chairman