

CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Economic Vitality Commission

5:30 PM
 February 20, 2019

MINUTES

Pickering Room
 1775 12th Ave. NW

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Commissioners Present:

Therese Garcia, Vice Chair
 Christopher Beaudoin
 Samantha Breider
 Kathy McCorry
 Kristi Tripple

Administration/Staff:

Christopher Wright, Economic Dev. Mgr.
 Tim Dutter, Economic Dev. Manager
 Emily Arteche, Senior Planner
 Keith Niven, Econ. Dev. & Dev. Svcs. Dir.
 Lucy Sloman, Land Development Mgr.

Commissioners Not Present:

Amit Bhardwaj
 Karl Leigh
 Ashwin Muthuvenkataraman
 Saikat Sen
 Sage Khanuja, Youth Adv. Board

CALL TO ORDER

GARCIA, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM.

Wright noted that HOWLETT, Chair, has resigned from the EVC and is unable to attend tonight's meeting. He noted that EVC will need to elect a new Chair, and can take nominations tonight or defer that action until the next meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) MOVED BY BEAUDOIN, SECONDED BY TRIPPLE that minutes of the meeting on January 16, 2019 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED, 5-0.

AGENDA ITEMS

a) Sign Code Update (I)

Presented by:

Emily Arteche, Senior Planner

Arteche made staff's presentation on a new signage update project to legalize, streamline, and simplify the City's sign code. She gave information on the City's existing sign code process, and explained the need to streamline how the public gets information now on the City's sign code. She explained the goals of the update, including compliance with a recent US Supreme Court case (Reed vs. Town of Gilbert), which provides direction to cities, town, and counties regarding regulation of signs, particularly for temporary signs, with regard to content and freedom of speech. She also explained the City's objective to simplify the signage code.

She gave examples of signs that could be affected by neutralizing the content, as specified in Reed v. Town of Gilbert, and gave more details about what the City can regulate (specifically time, place, and manner). BEAUDOIN asked are there current instances of traffic signs or sandwich signs that would be affected. Arteche replied the new ruling could have an impact to temporary, commercial, and real estate signs, but changes to traffic signs are not likely. Sloman said an example is a commercial sign that incorporates religious symbols, which could cross over into a freedom of speech issue. She added that communities all over the country are having to review and examine their sign codes, and appeals are expected. The City will be

monitoring and watching what other communities are doing with regard to compliance with the Supreme Court ruling, she noted.

Arteche explained the expectation is that the project will result in a single, more user-friendly sign code for the public to use than what exists now. She explained the public outreach activities and legislative process that are planned in 2019, leading to anticipated Council action in early 2020. TRIPPLE suggested staff do some kind of focus group with local signage companies to get their comments on the new sign code. Staff made a note of it.

GARCIA asked whether any guidelines were issued with the Supreme Court's ruling. Sloman explained that the Supreme Court tends to allow lower court rulings to provide implementation guidelines, and appeals are expected. McCORRY asked is staff looking at how other cities are approaching this issue. Sloman replied yes; the City is working with a land use attorney who has been working with other regional jurisdictions, such as the City of Olympia.

BEAUDOIN asked how the new sign code would work in practice, such as someone running for office. Arteche described how people can be notified of changes in the City's sign code, including through subscriptions to the City's web page. Sloman said BEAUDOIN's point is a good one, and the City will have to do some education so people contemplating signs for home businesses, real estate, and so on will know the regulations for compliance. Niven noted the "content neutral" piece of this issue means that all signs have to be treated the same in terms of content. The City can only regulate how long signs can be displayed, their size, materials, and so on.

McCORRY said a streamlined process for understanding the City's sign code would benefit the business community. Niven agreed, and said we will do our best to write a code that is as clear as possible, which will be better for staff and better for businesses. Sloman said staff intends to create a chart that clearly explains regulations for the most commonly requested signs, and staff can be available to work with anyone whose needs are not covered by the chart. TRIPPLE added photos and illustrations are really helpful for businesses trying to understand the sign code, especially if they are working without a sign consultant.

Wright said another objective in revising the City's sign code is to fix inconsistencies and add clarity where the code has not been clear. Staff will continue to update the EVC as the sign code update project progresses.

b) ED Report Card (I)

Presented by:

Economic Development Director/Staff

Niven presented the status of action items to implement the City's Economic Development Strategy Plan for the next three-year cycle of the plan (2019-2121). The Commissioners reviewed the first 23 of the 46 action items, and indicated their thoughts on retaining, deleting, and/or modifying those items, which included the following (completed items have been removed from the list):

- Meet with employers
- Partner with Chamber and DIA for business outreach
- Serve as business ombudsman within the City
- Support efforts to create new I-90 crossing
- Ensure business needs are considered in regional transportation discussion
- Identify missing links, examine mobility and transportation alternatives
- Develop transportation infrastructure funding strategy
- Partner with Chamber to analyze business utility needs

- Identify infrastructure needs to facilitate Central Issaquah
- Compare Issaquah and peer cities on fees, taxes, and cost of doing business
- Improve management of business data
- Create easy to navigate web site and “Welcome Wagon”
- Streamline change of use process
- Conduct sector analysis to determine business mix that fits City’s vision
- Create business identity/brand
- Secure funding for multi-media marketing plan
- Create and implement marketing plan
- Increase partnerships/communications with real estate brokers, site selectors
- Deepen professional relationships with public and private organizations
- Develop an Innovative Partnership Zone (IPZ)

During the Commission’s discussion, BEAUDOIN asked whether budget exists for the City to procure contracting services to accomplish some of these actions, such as marketing and branding. Niven explained the process staff would follow to include a budget request to accomplish any of these items. The Commission was particularly interested in requesting budget for “Conduct sector analysis” and “Explore consolidated marketing efforts.” The Commission will continue its review and discussion of the remaining items at the next EVC meeting.

c) Planning Calendar (D)

Presented by:

Christopher Wright, Economic Development Manager

Wright said the Mayor plans to attend the next EVC meeting. He noted that an open house sponsored by the Downtown Issaquah Association will be held next Monday beginning at 3:00 PM, and gave the schedule of activities planned for that meeting.

Niven said the next step in the City’s Strategic Plan is to take the City-generated draft plan to the public for their feedback and reactions. He said staff will provide a copy of that plan to the EVC as soon as it is available.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

None.

OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Commissioners agreed to hold nominations and election for a new EVC Chair at the next EVC meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to conduct, GARCIA adjourned the meeting at 7:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary