

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

February 25, 2020

The Economic Development Committee of Chardon City Council met on Tuesday, February 25, 2020, at 4:45 PM in Conference Room A on the second floor of the Chardon Municipal Center.

Heather Means, Chairman of Economic Development Committee presiding.

Members of Economic Development Committee present: Nancy McArthur, Heather Means.

Others present: City Manager Randy Sharpe, Community Development Coordinator Steve Yaney, Clerk of Council Amy Day.

Ms. Means called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mrs. McArthur moved and Mrs. McArthur seconded to approve the minutes of the Economic Development Committee meeting from February 5, 2020.

Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

**Regarding Buxton's proposal**, City Manager Randy Sharpe reported that Buxton had previously made a presentation to the City similar to Retail Strategies. He explained that the largest difference between the two companies is that Buxton gathers and provides information to the City which the City would then implement. Whereas, Retail Strategies also does the implementation.

Ms. Means stated that Buxton does not appear to fit the need that the City has now.

Mr. Yaney stated that Buxton tends to serve larger communities that have dedicated economic development staff.

Ms. Means stated that because Buxton would gather the data and then turn it over to the City, and the City does not have someone to turn it over to in a successful way, she does not wish to consider Buxton.

Mrs. McArthur concurred that Buxton does not fit the City's needs, because of the City's size and the City does not have a

dedicated staff member.

**Regarding the Retail Strategies proposal,** members of the Committee and staff reviewed the reference checks done on Retail Strategies.

Mr. Yaney stated that he reached two references for Retail Strategies and their comments were very positive and they spoke very highly of Retail Strategies.

Mr. Sharpe stated that he was unable to reach his reference.

Ms. Means stated that she spoke with four references for Retail Strategies. Overall, the references for Retail Strategies were positive. All said that the customer service was good and they provided the data that they said they would. Additionally, all the communities also noted that it takes two years before seeing any results. One community expressed that they felt that while Retail Strategies did what they said they would, they would have liked them to have been more transparent with leads. In conclusion, there were two communities that were not going to rehire Retail Strategies because they had their own reasons locally not to rehire them. The third was unsure and the fourth was extremely happy.

Ms. Means noted that she will convey to Dennis Maher of Retail Strategies that their reference list needs to be updated to reflect communities who are willing to provide feedback.

Ms. Means stated that enough money hasn't been budgeted to allow for Retail Strategies to be hired.

Mr. Sharpe stated that it has not been included in the temporary budget; however, he believes the money can be found and included in the permanent budget.

Mrs. McArthur stated that Retail Strategies seems to be the best fit for the City.

Mr. Sharpe spoke in favor of sending staff to the Retail Academy.

Committee members concurred with Mr. Sharpe's comment.

Discussion occurred regarding when the contract starts and there was concurrence that it would start on a month of the City's choosing.

Ms. Means stated that she wanted the contract to include maintaining an active database of retail and commercial spaces. She added that she wanted the demographic information to be available to merchants. She wants to show that the City is receiving something measurable from Retail Strategies.

**Mrs. McArthur moved and Ms. Means seconded to recommend to Council the hiring of Retail Strategies. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion occurred regarding Chardon being a shopping hub for surrounding townships and that the City's population of just over 5,000 may be deceiving for business attraction which is what Retail Strategies can help with.

**Regarding business visitations,** Mr. Yaney reported that he has two business visitations scheduled in the upcoming weeks.

Ms. Means stated that she would like to see a goal of 12 business visitations per year with a variety of business sizes. She expressed the importance of the visitations and requested that Mr. Yaney schedule the visits regardless if a Committee member is available to go with him.

Mr. Sharpe asked if 10 visitations was acceptable.

The Committee concurred that 10 visitations per year was acceptable.

Ms. Means asked about the process and questionnaire. She suggested meeting with some newer Main Street businesses and some of the larger businesses to inquire if their needs are being met and if they are considering expansion.

Ms. Means asked how the business visitations will be reported back to Council.

Mr. Sharpe stated that the results have historically been reported in aggregate.

Mrs. McArthur stated that if a business has an issue that should be discussed further, this could be discussed with the Committee.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION - none.**

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mrs. McArthur noted that she will contact Middlefield Village Mayor, Ben Garlich who is willing to discuss their rebranding experience with the Committee.

The next Economic Development Committee meeting was set for March 23, 2020 at 5:30 PM to review the proposal by Retail Strategies if Council agrees that this is something they would like to do (meeting later cancelled).

**ADJOURN**

Mrs. McArthur moved and Ms. Means seconded to adjourn. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Attest:

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AMY DAY  
Clerk of Council