



FARMINGTON DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING – WORK SESSION
Council Chamber, City Hall

Thursday, July 21, 2011

A special meeting of the Farmington Downtown Development Authority was called to order by President Rock at 4:09 p.m.

Present: Buck, Cowley, Frost, Gajewski, Higgins, Rock, Wasen

Absent: Cornwell, Jewett, Schneemann

Also Present: Annette Knowles, Executive Director
Julie Courtney, Main Street Oakland County
Todd Barman, National Main Street Center
Valerie Knol, Farmington City Council
JoAnne McShane, Farmington City Council
Vincent Pastue, City Manager

The purpose of the work session is to present the outcome of the Main Street Oakland County Technical Visit. The outcome is a list of strategies. Facilitator Barman will present an economic development assessment.

Barman opened by remarking that the DDA needs to reposition the organization as an economic development organization, as the business model has grown.

Barman discussed a list of strategies, as follows:

1. The DDA's first job is to write its own business plan that property reflects its model. If the DDA wants to be set up to perform economic development, than it should be the main focus of that plan. The Design Committee should take on a greater role in the physical improvements. In the plan, you must define who you are serving – property owners? Business owners? Ask what they want from the DDA and identify what you do best. Find other players so you do not duplicate efforts. Review your human resources on all levels – paid staff, contractors and volunteers. Look at marketing – how is the DDA going to communicate with its customers. Set up a sustainable financial plan. Craft policies and procedures after you have crafted your organization. Clarify how you view the City of Farmington, as a customer or as a parent. Structurally, pay attention to chain of command and supervision. Zero in on a core group of services, which will be a challenge for the board. The DDA cannot do everything. In the business/property owner group interview, the participants stated they want the DDA to work on parking. Find new revenue sources beyond the TIF to diversify in the wake of fallen property values. What is the timing of the business plan?

- Get it done now, before you pursue other recommendations. This process may result in turnover of board members, staff members and volunteers. You may have to section it out or find a facilitator to work through issues.
2. Building customer relationships is an issue larger than just staff or the ER Committee. It requires board participation. Pull in a crew of volunteers. Relationship-building should be without strings attached. This is year one job.
 3. The DDA should seriously take on parking. Take ownership of it. Manage it. Improve it. Enforce it. This is a year one job. It was suggested to make this a core theme. Alternately, if you don't want to get serious about it, turn it over to a parking authority.
 4. Make targeted market research part of your ongoing operations. ER needs to think along these lines, across all activities. Gather and gain information for and from events. What is the market position for Downtown Farmington? Define it; who is the primary target, what are we best at selling (segmentation). It's difficult to have multiple target markets or areas with different target markets. You are not ready for business recruitment until this is accomplished.
 5. Move in the direction of having a more concrete Downtown Development Plan, which includes business mix, clustering and a leasing strategy. An example might be to package services for property owners if they then give you a first right of refusal on tenants. The property owners need to own creative leasing strategies, i.e. first year free on a third year lease.
 6. Get proactive in putting resources into Community Initiated Development, where the DDA acts as the developer. There are advantages to pursuing CID. Barman remarked on community-owned and operated businesses as well.
 7. Host forums or summits with your economic development partners, to find out what is going on and to share information.

Regarding events, Barman stated that the DDA should think accomplishing more day-to-day marketing.

Barman remarked that the first businesses that come back after a decline are restaurants and that they complement most other uses.

Barman will produce a report on these strategies and supply examples or additional sources to help in their successful completion.

The board expressed its gratitude to Barman and MSOC for the opportunity.

Motion by Higgins, Supported by Frost
RESOLVED, that the meeting be adjourned.
Motion carried, all ayes.

The work session was adjourned at 6:01p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Annette M. Knowles