

**RED HOOK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Thursday February 22, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 P.M.

Members Attending: T. Haney, K. Jetto, R. McCann, B. Mitchell, D. Moat, L. Page, K. Zulch, K. Wade and H. Ramsey, representing the Town Board

Others: W. Cordier, M. Johnson, R. McKeon, K. Stewart and, by video, *Citizens For A Concerned Red Hook*.

The Minutes of the January 25, 2007 meeting, having been distributed previously were approved.

The Chairman opened the meeting by stressing three points:

1. Given the current political climate and the number of significant issues that are being discussed, the Committee has an excellent opportunity to make a significant contribution to the Town Board and members of the community. The requests being made to the Committee and its members and the interest being shown by the increasing visitors attending our meetings would confirm this fact.
2. Notwithstanding specific demands made to it, the task of the EDC, as an advisory committee, must be that of developing and distributing objective, factual data and information considered to be of value to those engaged in discussions, those responsible for making recommendations and, when appropriate, the community itself. Unless specifically requested by the Town Board, it should not be the responsibility of the Committee to take a position for or against any specific proposal. While no vote was taken, the views expressed by some of the members supported this position without dissent.
3. If the Committee is to move quickly and effectively, it behooves each member to become involved in assisting in developing information and recommendations on one or more of these critical issues. While the following individual commitments were made, it was understood that we would seek all of the non-member support available including that of the members of other advisory committees and working groups and such outside organizations and individuals as possible.

The Committee, having commented previously on the proposed priority issues, engaged in the following discussions.

I PROPERTY TAXES

Examination of limited data and an expanding base of anecdotal information suggest that there is a significant, and increasing, tax problem in the community. An exhibit that was distributed, which had been developed from data supplied by the Town's Assessor's office, indicated that 96% of our total local tax burden was shouldered by residential tax payers. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that our senior citizens, who represent approximately one-fourth of our homeowners, are particularly burdened as a result of the rapid increase in property taxes compared to the less rapid rise in their median incomes. Notwithstanding that the level of local taxes reflects policies of the state government and the impact of our school system (see the following discussion area), it was proposed that the Committee should develop data that would confirm the seriousness of the problem and, to the extent possible, offer specific alternative responses to the problem.

The following members agreed to work on this issue. K. Zulch, R. Burnswick, D.Moat

II SCHOOL TAXES

The costs of the RHCS D represent 76% of our total tax burden. (\$14.34 of the \$18.70 total Town tax rate). It is an unquestioned fact that state policies have deprived the district of a substantial portion of the funds to which it believes it is entitled. Nonetheless, the Committee believes that the subject should be one with which the Committee should become familiar.

The following members agreed to work together: B. Mitchell, K. Jetto, D.Moat

III LAND USE ISSUES.

Few subjects are receiving as much current attention and involve the commitment of as much of the community's current and future funding as land use issues. Among other things, this subject is the primary focus of the work of the Inter-Municipal Task Force; is the *raison d'être* of the proposed Community Preservation Act which is to be considered by the Town Board at its next meeting (it was approved and will now go to a public referendum proposed for early May); is the motivation for a special Zoning Review Committee that has been formed to evaluate current zoning regulations; and, is at the heart of the Town's current PDR program under which a community guaranteed Bond was issued and several applications are pending.

The following members agreed to work on this issue. L. Page, K. Zulch, D. Moat

IV INTERNET MARKETING

The development and implementation of an internet marketing program to help expand our local businesses continues to merit the attention of the Committee.

The following members agreed to work in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce on this issue: T. Haney, R. McCann, B. Mitchell

V COMMUNITY DATA BASE

The difficulty and cost associated with developing meaningful, reliable and consistent data merits consideration of the development of a community data base. The existence of such data would be available to, and should be of considerable value to, many of the Town's advisory and working committees and would facilitate inexpensive and regular evaluation of significant community issues.

D. Moat agreed to propose a preliminary approach which would be distributed and amended by the members.

VI INCREASING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

While of significant importance this subject was not developed beyond the Committee's past discussions that confirmed the importance of communicating all key findings to local media and, when appropriate, the community itself.

OTHER BUSINESS

- It was indicated that one of the Town Board members had expressed a view that the exception in the proposed CPA applying to the transfer of parcels with an easement did not apply to that portion of the parcel on which a residence was situated. K. Wade agreed to make a preliminary review of the proposed Act and if this did not seem to be a proper interpretation to ask Harold to have the town counsel express an official opinion.
- Mr. McKeon gave the Committee a copy of the criteria that were used to identify and support the proposed Agriculture Reserve – now to be named the Agricultural Business district. A new and updated map of the specific area is to be available.
- Many of the problems facing the community overlap the work of several of the advisory and working committees. This gave rise to the suggestion that the Chairs of the various committees should try to meet on a bi-monthly basis for an informal discussion of common issues and ways in which their efforts might be better and more efficiently supportive of common goals. Harold agreed to try to facilitate an initial meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 P.M.

**THE NEXT MEETING IS TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 22, 2007
AT 7:30 p.m.**