

MINUTES  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPONSORED WORKSHOP MEETING  
City Hall Conference Room #1  
405 South Seguin  
Saturday, March 1, 2008  
9:00 AM

Be it known that the City of Converse Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors sponsored a workshop meeting at the City of Converse City Hall Conference Room #1 located at 405 S. Seguin on Saturday, March 1, 2008 at 9:00 AM. The following were present:

Mr. Al Suarez, Mayor	Ms. Dorian Jauregui, Fire-EMS Commission Chair
Dr. Reginal Harris, EDC Chair	Mr. Chris Bazany, Fire-EMS Commission Vice-Chair
Mr. John Mendoza, EDC Vice-Chair	Ms. Tonya Drake, P&R Commission Chair
Ms. Gloria Weers, EDC Board Member	Ms. Sandy Laskowski, P&R Commission Vice-Chair
Ms. Laura Beehler, B&E Commission Chair	Dr. Mary Riley, Planning Commission Chair
Ms. Janie Olds, B&E Commission Member	Mr. Bruce Cannon, Zoning Commission Chair
Mr. Jon Lindgren, B&S Commission Chair	Mr. Mark Luft, EDC Executive Director
Ms. Hope Olds, B&S Commission Member	Ms. Jackie Gaines, EDC Assistant
Mr. Howie Marbach, EDC Board Member	

Visitors:

Ms. Becky Johnson, Salitrillo Creek Partners, LLC; and Ms. Mendoza were present.

**1. Call Meeting to Order.**

Dr. Harris called the meeting to order at approximately 9:05 am and asked the record to reflect EDC has a quorum.

Dr. Harris welcomed Mayor Suarez to the meeting and opened the floor to the Mayor.

Mayor Suarez thanked everyone for taking this Saturday morning to attend the Strategic Planning Committee meeting. We are here today because we want input from community leaders and citizens. We are trying to come up with a document that shows where Converse is going and how are we going to get there. We have a lot of good tools in place; we have the zoning map, newly approved Smart Code, the Zoning and Planning Commissions, as well as the EDC. What this plan does is connect the dots and put it in a big document and tells us how we are going to get there. We want to get there without having to back track and make costly investments especially when you are working with a city. We need to make sure we have gas stations and restaurants. The city is getting better restaurant wise thanks to the EDC. This is what Strategic Planning is all about; we have the people here but we do not have the restaurants. We have to get a group present and follow this and make a more detailed Master Plan. This is the beginning of this, it will not be one individual doing this by themselves but it will be a quality effort between you, the City Council, and the citizens of this city and hopefully come up with a quality document. This is a living document meaning things will change from year to year. Priorities, funding and budgets will change.

## **2. Recognition of Visitors.**

Dr. Harris recognized members and visitors. Dr. Harris thanked everyone for coming out and being a part of history; the history of making the City of Converse a better place to live, work, and play. Dr. Harris gave Mayor Suarez a special thank you for having a vision to make and effectuate responsible change, and to the City Council for supporting this endeavor. Thanks to our leads: Vice-Chair Mendoza and Councilwoman Gloria Weers for taking the reins of this process and moving it along and helping get a Strategic Plan for our City. We can not forget Ms. Hope Olds and Dr. Betty Harkins who were their in the beginning and helped draft a lot of the documents you see today.

Vice-Chairman Mendoza thanked everyone for their effort with special thanks first and foremost to Mr. Luft and Ms. Gaines for the strenuous work they had to do the last two weeks. Most of the work was reactionary and timely because we had to have this meeting on the first of March. They did a tremendous amount of work, had to do a lot paperwork that was done and I want to thank them for their time, effort, and good work they have done putting these documents together.

## **3. Purpose.**

Vice-Chair Mendoza referred to a briefing that was handed out and stated I am not here to try to force you to change the way you think. I am here to try to share some information of a vision that we put together that started when I was first asked to consider being on the EDC and it has moved forward with the Mayor, followed up by the City Council approving the proposal and this is where we are at today.

Vice-Chair Mendoza continued with the briefing and covered the following information:

- The Purpose: is outlined and aligned with the official agenda.

## **4. Discuss Steering Committee's City-Wide Strategic Planning Workshop.**

- Why Do a Strategic Plan: The main purpose is that we have to have a big picture/vision of what the City is and what we as part of being citizens of Converse want it to be. We have to be willing to incorporate organization within the city, businesses and most importantly our communities. Our goal particularly with this body here is to pull people resources and get them involved. Information we use will put a questionnaire together which will go back to the citizens. We will capture that data then give it to a consultant who will develop a questionnaire for us.
- The last bullet is the most important: Find out how much time, money and other resources are needed to create this change.

## **5. Discuss the Needs Assessment Survey Questionnaire.**

## **6. Discuss How to Best Distribute Questionnaire to Converse Residents and Stakeholders.**

(Items 5 and 6 were discussed together.)

- Assessment Survey: The lead organization is the EDC and the body here is going to make this possible. We as this governing body of the City of Converse will over see this strategic planning to a certain point. That point will be when we decide everything is ready to turn over to Mr. Luft who will then turn it over to a consultant to do the survey questionnaire. Subsequently to that will be the Strategic Plan. We will develop the time schedule for this to happen. You together with me, the Mayor, staff, and our Chair, we are the ones that will have to determine the resources and establish the process. Your input will determine the agenda, which we will have in one to one and a half months from now, and we set the time and date for the city-wide strategic

planning for the community, businesses, and churches. Any organizations in the city will be able to attend. We need to determine how we are going to facilitate where we are going to hold that meeting which is only going to last about four hours, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm with lunch served.

- Smart Code:
- Article 1 Authority

Questions from Ms. Hope Olds:

- Knowing how active the EDC has been so far, has within that organization already been a design in mind how this city will look at a City Central?
- If there is such a design already for a City Central, then what residents will have an impact and what effort will be made to get them involved early on with the understanding of what that impact will mean to them?

Vice-Chair Mendoza asked Mr. Luft to answer the first question on the Center of Converse.

Mr. Luft stated he can only answer from an economic development standpoint, not regionally like we are trying to do. We tried to establish how our Town looked in 1877 and we look at what Ms. Amy Voges contributed many years ago. When Mr. Weers was Chairman of the EDC Board, we took a one day trip to the Dallas area in the town of South Lake which has brand new buildings that look 100 years old and we thought that is the new urbanism that is coming out, so we went back to our roots. We are trying to preserve what is here already.

In 2005, we had a public hearing for the Gibbs Sprawl Road redevelopment/revitalization effort. The first phase was to redevelop the Boeck property. Salitrillo Creek Partners came up with the design using two architecture firms from San Antonio. The EDC Board and support staff decided to preserve what we had and build on that which will make us unique from the cities around us. That is what we are doing with the Town Center. The staff has been working on the Smart Code for two years to get this adopted. The Smart Code takes the consideration of the Planning and Zoning Commission to try to focus on commercial districts, which are FM 1516 (between FM 1976 and FM 78), FM 78, Loop 1604, and FM 1976. What we want to do is make sure there are no more medal buildings coming into this community because we want you to have a warm sense of place when you come here. We thought EDC could contribute to that by setting a certain type of architecture in place. We will look at landscaping and the sign ordinance to see what kind of signs you will be able to use. The obstacles we have are TXDOT. We have to work with them on how we develop our right-of-ways, ingress, and egress. We are only building from a commercial standpoint, not a residential standpoint. The residential portion of the City is not in the scope of what we, (EDC), are trying to do.

Mr. Marbach remarked on the marketing analysis research he did when they were able to get the Library started. Speaking as a business man, I can not run my business on Converse alone. I have to draw from a four mile radius. Our questionnaire has to involve the out-of-city consumers.

Ms. Becky Johnson with Salitrillo Creek Partners, LLC, said she has to agree with Mr. Marbach and depending on the type of establishments we will have to go beyond the area of draw. One of my biggest concerns as far as the Strategic Plan is by getting the Smart Code passed will slow down the development and attract the proper type of mixed use developers in this location. One of the biggest challenges I have is when I bring developers in the area and they see they need to develop everything. We are moving in that direction and Mr. Marbach is right on target saying that our audience is the Metrocom area.

Question from Ms. Beehler:

- How did we let the shopping center that is being built beside the Post Office have concrete and no green space?

Mr. Luft replied that is why we need to have the Smart Code in place. I can not answer why.

Mayor Suarez added the Smart Code will ask all the right questions connecting the dots to the Strategic Plan asking does this fit the visions of our City. So these questions will be asked to prevent having to back track in building in the city that do not fall in the original plan.

Mr. Marbach remarked on a survey in our area that has already been done. In the 90's Ms. Gering sent out a survey. In 2004 a Consumer Research Site Analysis was done which really helps us in this area.

Ms. Weers interjected saying she was not satisfied with Ms. Beehler's answer to her question. If this business can come in and put concrete anywhere, do we not have a 'green ordinance' or does the Smart Code not cover this?

Dr. Mary Riley said when someone comes to the Planning Commission with their plans and they do not have a green space, we will not say yes and approve them. That is one way to stop everything from happening until we get everything in place. The building she is referring to knew there was to be a green space, however, that building was sold to the present owners and (the present owners) never came to the Planning Commission or we would have not voted yes on this without a green space. The Commission feels very strongly on a green space. I can't enforce this. If we told them they have to have a green space and they don't then City Council can. This is one of those things that got slid in between the cracks. Is there anything stopping us from going to these people and saying in order to attract businesses, we really do want some green space.

Mr. Cannon discussed way finding signs and how he thought this would be way to have consistency and developing continuity so people will know where the parks are and will know of different activities. Getting signs that look attractive and nice will have an immediate impact as well as a long range goal.

Ms. Weers gave a briefing on a sign company she would like the City to consider. The businesses or the developer will pay for the signs.

**8. Discuss Future Agenda Items.**

Future agenda items were discussed throughout the meeting.

**9. Date and Time of Next Meeting.**

Vice-Chairman Mendoza thanked everyone for their questions. You need to pick how we are going to take this process and move it to this meeting and you need to pick future agenda items setting the date and time of the next meeting.

Some suggestions were:

- Judson Arts Center

Vice-Chairman Mendoza replied if that is where you want to meet the Mayor will go after that, he has already committed to that.

- Maranatha Church
- St. Monica's Gym
- Boysville

**7. Discuss Next Steps**

Vice-Chairman Mendoza said the Mayor has already given us directions for four hours of 8:00 to 1:00 or 9:00 to 1:00. It will probably be 8:00 to 1:00 because we are going to serve breakfast and we will kick it off at 9:00.

Question directed to Vice-Chairman Mendoza asking if this body is going to meet again prior to the meeting.

Dr. Harris replied we need to. We need to know what we are going to talk about at that meeting. Dr. Harris added he thought each of the leaders in this meeting should come up with two points for each agenda item, items 5, 6, 7, and 8. E-mail those to Vice-Chairman Mendoza so he can compile them so that when we come back to the next meeting we can build a plan of action.

Mr. Mendoza asked for them to be e-mailed to him and copy Mr. Luft and Ms. Gaines.

Dr. Harris said we need two dates; one for the next Steering Committee and one for the actual Committee meeting. By the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, please have your two points e-mailed.

Dr. Harris reiterated Saturday, March 22, 2008 from 10:00 to noon is the next meeting.

Ms. Tonya Drake, P&R Chairman asked if we were going to decide on a date of the big meeting also.

Dr. Harris said we need to notify the businesses and the residents and asked Mr. Luft how we are going to pay for this? Is this something EDC can expense in terms of the postage and whatever?

Mr. Luft replied this is a dilemma we are having. What is the authority the EDC has first and what is the general function of the other side of the City.

Dr. Harris asked is this something we can take to Council and get approval and just expense the postage. I will make the postcards.

Vice-Chairman Mendoza said Mr. Luft is right; Strategic Planning is the City and not EDC.

Mayor Suarez replied I do see a problem with EDC and a City-driven function. I do not see a problem with EDC funding it all. This is economic development.

Vice-Chairman Mendoza said I am not thinking so much of funding, I agree with you Mayor in terms of funding but in terms of signatures for the correspondence that goes out, which leadership is going to sign those. I agree, I think we need to pay for what ever it costs for the paperwork. But in terms of the signatures I think Strategic Planning is a city function.

Mayor Suarez said to go with the City as far as the signatures and invitations. Since you have the businesses, you can add the EDC in there also.

Mr. Luft made clarification with Mayor Suarez that this is a City sponsored function.

Mayor Suarez replied yes. This is very similar to the ribbon cuttings that are jointly City and EDC.

Dr. Harris said to Mayor Suarez we will have some kind of correspondence for your input to invite the community.

Mr. Luft asked if we want to send invitations to over 5000 water accounts.

Dr. Harris replied that we want to keep this targeted. I think we can talk about this in the next meeting of how we want to target the market we want to invite.

Dr. Harris and Vice-Chairman Mendoza recommended having the Strategic meeting before the elections in May.

The constituents and stakeholders meeting is set for Saturday, April 26, 2008 from 8:00 to 1:00 and serve breakfast from 800 – 9:00.

Mr. Luft said Ms. Gaines will call on the availability.

Vice-Chairman Mendoza asked that whoever allows us to meet, give them a part upfront in the introductions of that meeting.

#### **10. Adjournment.**

Dr. Harris adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:01 AM.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 8<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2008.

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Dr. Reginal Harris  
EDC Chairman

ATTEST:

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Jackie Gaines  
Secretary