

Fairfax Town Council Minutes  
Adjourned Meeting "Economic Summit"  
Fairfax Women's Club  
Saturday, April 26, 2008, at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call:

**COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT:** Larry Bragman  
Susan Brandborg  
Mary Ann Maggiore  
Lew Tremaine  
David Weinsoff

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** Michael Rock, Town Manager  
Ann Welsh, Planning Director  
Judy Anderson, Town Clerk

Mayor Maggiore called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Approval of Agenda and Affidavit of Posting

M/S, Tremaine/Brandborg, Motion to approve the agenda and the affidavit of posting.

AYES: Bragman, Brandborg, Maggiore, Tremaine, Weinsoff  
NOES: None

Open Time for Public Expression

No speakers came forward.

Economic Summit

Mayor Maggiore introduced Pamela Gibson, a business consultant and former City Manager, who had been hired to guide the Town in creating a more sustainable and successful business climate downtown.

Pamela Gibson stated that she was not presenting the conclusion of the study, but that she was describing practical steps to improve downtown businesses to make them more successful. She noted that economic development had to be a sustainable process. She stated that energy should be focused on nurturing the existing businesses and encouraging entrepreneurship, a process she referred to as "business gardening" that was designed for communities without Redevelopment Agencies and without dedicated economic development staff. She explained that the process of nurturing and sustaining current businesses started with her talking to the businesses to find out what they needed. She further stated that good information about Town businesses should be on the Town's web site; that the business owners needed to know how to access low- or no-cost business counseling services available; and that she was hopeful that she could help set something up for the Town's businesses.

As a first step in the "Business Gardening" process, she described the "Community Assessment" she would perform that included walking around the business area, noting

obvious omissions and existing conditions as well as what amenities existed and which ones were lacking. She also described the documents she would be reviewing, including the General Plan and business license application. She brought copies of a questionnaire for the business owners to complete as part of the process.

Ms. Gibson described the next step as the preparation of a preliminary plan that would be amended and brought before the Chamber and the Council. She expressed hope that the plan would be in place by summer and that it would incrementally improve the bottom line without changing the character of the town.

Mayor Maggiore opened the discussion to the audience.

Ingrid Weiss, Director of the Chamber, thanked the Town Council for their support of businesses and thanked Ms. Gibson; suggested that she guide Ms. Gibson on a walk through the downtown; and stated that she would like the Town to consider the formation of a Redevelopment Agency.

Chris Lang, Chamber President, Thanked everyone for attending, thanked the Town Council for their leadership; stated that over half of the businesses in town were not members of the Chamber; that it was a challenge to get residents to shop in Fairfax; that it would be good to capture the West Marin market; that the Chamber had done some extra advertising and was doing ongoing beautification downtown; and suggested that the Town could help by continuing the upgrade of the Pavilion and by rezoning the Marin Town and Country Club to get something done on that property.

Morgan Hall, 55 Bolinas Road, Architect, Chamber Board member, presented a plan to install street trees on Bolinas Road, reconfigure the parking, and to add an additional crosswalk at Mono. He noted that the sidewalks on Bolinas Road were in disrepair and that there were no trees and expressed his hope that the new plan would increase pedestrian traffic on Bolinas.

Lake Hanyu, new art studio owner, asked about the street cleaning and how it would be done with the planting of the trees and ascertained from Town Manager Rock that the trees wouldn't get in the way of the street cleaning.

Graham Irwin, Dominga Ave., stated that it was bad to have vacant store spaces in our town; that he had heard that there was nothing that we can do about the vacancies; that landlords didn't have an interest in the community; and asked what could be done if the landlords wouldn't cooperate.

Ms. Gibson led a discussion about empty commercial properties and described measures that had been taken in other communities.

Kelly, owner of Pancho Villa's Restaurant, stated that her business had been down about 20% since the closure of Albertson's.

Garry Graham, 19 Broadway, stated that Ms. Gibson was involved in helping the only real town left in Marin; that when he was the Chamber president there was a great deal of apathy on the part of the merchants; that he was delighted to see the merchants at the meeting and grateful that the Council had hired a consultant to move revitalization of downtown forward; that a business without a web site and email access was missing a

marketing opportunity; stated that it would be great to get a program for joint marketing for the businesses; that more pedestrians were needed; that maybe offering a 10% discount for locals would help get people to shop in town; thanked the Council for being pro-business and for hiring Ms. Gibson; and stated that he was excited about the possibilities.

Ann Altman, co-owner of Iron Springs Brewery, thanked the Town for the Center Blvd. Project.

Rose Taber, Rainbow Fabrics, stated that the empty storefronts could benefit business owners by keeping landlords from raising the rents too high and could also show people that there were places available to open a business. She further stated that there was no way to walk downtown from homes in the hills; that there was no parking downtown for customers because of the lack of parking enforcement; that the sidewalks needed improvement; that service businesses didn't attract customers like the retail did; that hers was the only retail shop on her block; that Dance Theater 7 occupied 3 commercial spaces that weren't retail; and that most businesses didn't clean the sidewalks in front of their businesses.

Town Manager Rock stated that there was \$125,000 available in Measure K funds for improvement of the sidewalks; that the sidewalks were very narrow with utilities in the way; that the new Public Works Director would be starting in a week's time and would be developing a plan for the sidewalks; that a Storm Drain project bid came in low making more money available for other projects; that some of the panels would have to be replaced; and that there were other things that could be done to beautify the sidewalks and to reduce the potential conflict with the provision of parking.

Jim Ringseis, owner of Ringseis Designs, stated that roots of the trees in front of his business on Sir Francis Drake had moved the sidewalks up and created a trip hazard; that the sidewalks were buckling in front of his shop; and asked if he could remove the tree causing the damage.

Town Manager Rock stated that the tree could be removed with the proper permits.

Anakala Carmassi, owner of Tela D, on Bolinas Road, stated that her best customers walked from other areas of town; that she wasn't as concerned about parking spaces; that she would rather have a bench and a tree than a parking space; suggested creative, artistic sidewalks with native drought resistant trees and plants; and stated that the best thing was to have the people, the merchants, the Chamber and the Town Council all work together on solutions.

Marcia Hagen, Forrest Terrace, spoke as a customer of local businesses; asked about the Farmers Market and whether it provided an opportunity for local merchants to expand their operations; stated that she hadn't seen any local people selling at the market; and suggested that maybe local crafts people could sell at the market.

Kelly, with Coffee Roastery, stated that he liked what he was hearing and the way things were going.

Mike Luchessa, Plumb Builders, stated that he was ready to join in redevelopment for the renewal and energizing of downtown, and that he would like to be included in any bids for work to be done.

Trudy Totty, Manor Road, stated that she was excited about the process and about the coming together and the fresh tone that was coming from the Council; that she was all for beautifying and redeveloping; that the Roastery was a great example and clearly represented the values of Fairfax as local, local, local.

Mayor Maggiore adjourned the meeting for a break from 10:30 a.m. to 10:55 a.m.

Chris Lang worked up a list of projects that the Chamber would like to see happen in town, like mosaics, trees and bike racks; stated that they would like to have the Town's web site and the Chamber's site be linked to more widely disseminate information and ideas; and that the Chamber did have business directories that were being distributed.

Yvonne Roberts, Scenic Rd., described a town she had visited near Vancouver that touted itself as the "Town of Murals" with beautiful murals to attract people to their town.

Joe McWilliams, downtown insurance business owner, stated that he had heard that parking was a huge issue downtown and stated that it was something that could be addressed.

Matthew Edwards, Circle Center owner, Chamber Board member, stated that he started with Circle Center as a retail shop that later became a service-based business; that he didn't find it to be a retail oriented space; that services, entertainment and food were to connect with each other, not to buy things; that we should open up our expectations of what a downtown is; that for a small town to be vibrant it was more about connections, events, etc; that there were 23 parking spaces downtown and suggested centralized parking somewhere close by to allow people to walk around; that the downtown should pull people in; that we should be cultivating a walking people-connecting place instead of protecting parking spaces; that there needed to be a strong message to shop locally; that it was important to shop locally and to be part of a village; and that it was important to keep money in the town.

Anakala Carmassi, thinks the services should be in the upstairs with the retail downstairs; that more retail was needed in Fairfax; and that the customers who came for the services didn't patronize the retailers.

Mark Squire, Good Earth Natural Foods, stated that he was convinced that the more we made Fairfax a wonderful place to hang out the better it would be for local business. He suggested that Bolinas Road as a one-way street would be a dramatic change for the town but also a great possibility for the town. He also suggested that the Jerry Garcia memorial might be a draw for Fairfax.

Pam Gibson led a discussion about being branded as a "green" community and how to build on that concept.

Yvonne Roberts, Parks and Recreation Commissioner, stated that they had a proposal on the table to restore the Jerry Garcia memorial; that she liked the idea of a Marin

County Rock and Roll museum at the Albertson's site; and noted that the Festival was going to do a tribute to local rock and roll history.

The meeting was adjourned at Noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Anderson, Town Clerk