

Minutes
Special Called Meeting
Aberdeen Town Board

February 4, 2013
Monday, 6:00 p.m.

Robert N. Page Municipal Building
Aberdeen, North Carolina

The Aberdeen Town Board met on Monday, February 4, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. for a Special Called Meeting to discuss the Starworks entrepreneur opportunity for Aberdeen. Members present were Mayor Elizabeth B. Mofield, Mayor Pro-tem Robert A. Farrell and Commissioners Pat Ann McMurray and Walter Wright. Commissioners Jim Thomas and Alan Parker were not in attendance for the meeting. Staff members in attendance were Planning Director Kathy Liles, Community Development Planner Jae Kim, Town Manager Bill Zell, and Town Clerk Regina Rosy. Reporter for the Pilot Tom Embrey, Reporter for the Fayetteville Observer Steve DeVane, Maurice Holland, Sr., Tim Marcham, and Patrick Coughlin from the Moore County Chamber of Commerce were also in attendance for the meeting.

Planning Director Liles stated the purpose of tonight's meeting is to determine if the Town wants to participate in the Starworks project here in Aberdeen. Planning Director Liles stated the two basic Starworks objectives are a focused means of growing and developing creative enterprises and individuals for placement in the downtowns of our small communities, and develop agricultural and entrepreneurs to replace the farmers that are retiring. Planning Director Liles stated Nancy Gottovi's objective is to determine if their model can be replicated in other small town settings.

Planning Director Liles stated key components of the project are:

- Arts based incubator
- Heavy industry component: materials management, storage, kilns, manufacturing
- Education component with high school students
- Community center based on the arts
- Limited retail activity
- Entrepreneurial synergy

Planning Director Liles stated questions for the Board regarding this issue are:

- Do we want to partner with Starworks and see what is possible?
- Should it be an arts incubator?
- Downtown storefront or heavy industrial setting?
- Educational component? (informal relationships, Magnet, or charter school in conjunction with SCC, children, adults, etc.)
- Relationship with Business Guild?

Planning Director Liles stated before moving forward, it's always good to take a look back. In the 1990s, the Aberdeen Downtown Development Commission strategies were:

- Emphasize retail or store-front establishments versus other types of businesses (50-60%)
- Market niche focus – home furnishings/decorations, fine arts/antiques
- Quaint, charming, convenient and secure downtown district
- Is the concept compatible?

Planning Director Liles stated it is also helpful to take a look at an inventory of downtown assets from the Main Street Application. The inventory list includes:

- 87 building units suitable for commercial use
- 8 vacant buildings
- 63 businesses: 25 Retail, 5 Restaurants/Food/Beverage Services, 3 Professional Services, 30 Services Businesses

Planning Director Liles stated components of successful downtowns include the following:

- Action plan (to do list)
- Recruit critical mass
- Anchor tenants
- People living downtown
- Angel investors
- Gathering places/public markets
- Outdoor dining
- Invest heavily in retail beautification
- Acts/Entertainment
- Sell a feeling, not a place
- Lease agreements with days/operating hours
- 7-8-7 rule (70% from curb appeal, 80% consumers women, 70% after 6:00 p.m. sales)

Planning Director Liles stated if Aberdeen wanted to participate with Starworks, the following would be beneficial to the Town of Aberdeen:

- Development of entrepreneurs to fill our commercial spaces
- Ability to attract grants or other funding opportunities
- Compatibility with ADDC objectives, provide focus to downtown activities
- Anchor tenant, gathering space, attract new customers
- Use art to continuously engage the community to keep people coming back downtown
- Economics of Education (3 models)

Planning Director Liles stated another thought to consider is if Aberdeen has available space for a project such as Starworks. Planning Director Liles stated if it is in downtown, it should be central to retail walking space such as the church building on the corner, the Garden Room, or vacancy on South or Main Street. If it is in the industrial district, we need to

recognize that we lose benefits in downtown by pushing potential customers out. However, we gain large scale space in which to work.

Planning Director Liles stated one retail concept would be to acquire space that accomplishes the following:

- Glass blowers who have moved from training in Star to an incubator for artists in Aberdeen
- Retail sales of glass
- Glass blowing demonstrations
- Restaurant use to expose public to artists – an example would be glass earrings

Mayor Mofield stated she thinks we should consider what Aberdeen’s equivalent is to pottery in Star. Mayor Mofield also thought glass blowing would be manufacturing and the zoning would need to be changed. Furniture making, ceramics, candle makers, etc. were suggestions. Mr. Coughlin suggested something more cutting edge technology, such as holograms or something similar. Mayor Mofield pointed out that by providing a free or very inexpensive space for an incubator, it creates an environment of competition between the Town and private industry, which is not healthy. Mayor Mofield stated she would be more interested in a co-op situation. Mayor Pro-tem Farrell suggested some type of tie-in to the Farm to Table program, such as canning or cooking some of the locally grown products. Mr. Coughlin stated he believes there is a great need in the community for rental space with commercial cooking equipment.

Planning Director Liles asked if the Board is interested in pursuing a partnership with Starworks and see what is possible? Planner Kim stated Nancy Gottovi is ready to move forward. Commissioner Wright asked what would be required from the Town to move forward with this project? Planning Director Liles stated she believes at this point that Nancy Gottovi wants to try to replicate her project here in Aberdeen, and she has some grant money available to help during the planning process. Planning Director Liles stated at this point, she is wanting the Board to develop the framework for a project. Mayor Mofield stated she would be willing to create a budget for the planning process of this project, but she does not believe that government should buy buildings for entrepreneurs, but rather that should be left to private industry. Commissioner Wright stated he would think the next step would be for the Starworks staff to come and discuss this issue further with the Board. The Board agreed the meeting with Starworks staff would need to be a Special Called Meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wright, seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Farrell, to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimously carried.

Regina M. Rosy, Town Clerk

Elizabeth B. Mofield, Mayor

Minutes were completed in
Draft form on February 4, 2013

Minutes were approved
on February 11, 2013