

March 29, 2010

To: City of Sharon Community and Economic Development Commission

From: Strategic Planning Committee

Re: Comprehensive Strategic Plan - Announcement

The City of Sharon Community and Economic Development Commission was established by ordinance in April 2009 to develop, evaluate and assist in economic development in the City of Sharon, to review economic development projects and other projects having significant community impact and to advise the Sharon City Council regarding said development and projects.

Its members were appointed by Sharon Council and include:

John Evans, Vice President, First National Bank; Mike Lisac, owner of Warehouse Sales; Robert Wilson, Executive Director; Sales & Marketing; Roll Forming Corporation; Nick Baron, Director, Grove City Medical Center; Larry Klemens, Principal, Mercer County Career Center; Gary Rose, CFO/Controller, M.N. Goldstein Company and John Heutsche, Sales Representative, Health Care Solutions.

Since its inception, the Commission has been reviewing other similar municipalities' economic development models and meeting with representatives of those communities to gain an understanding of what best practices might be adopted to fulfill the Commission's mission. The Commission is beginning the process of developing a comprehensive strategic plan for community and economic development. The commission has been assisted by several members of the community at large, including Abbey Alter, John Bianco, Pastor Richard Roberts, Dawnlee Sheetz and Ira Saltz, who have regularly attended meetings and participated in the process.

The scope of this plan is to involve research and analysis leading ultimately towards developing a strategy and action plan relating to the retention and expansion of existing businesses and the attraction of new business in the City and region with the ultimate goal of improving the overall quality of life for residents. The comprehensive plan will serve to provide a direction to establish an overall vision for the entire community. The purpose of the plan is to provide that vision by capturing and articulating the desired community goals based on community conditions, attitudes and preferences. Ultimately the plan is to serve as a guide for day-to-day decisions by elected officials and administrative staff so that such decisions can be made knowing they are in accordance with the long-term goals and objectives of the community.

The comprehensive plan is to be done in phases under the guidance of the Commission and its Strategic Planning Committee. The Strategic Planning Committee is to act as steering group and is comprised of Commission members and representative of the community at large. Initial community involvement includes Penn State Shenango Faculty and Administration representatives, Ira Saltz and Philip Kennedy and Community Foundation of Western Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio Executive Director, Lawrence Haynes.

The initial phase will involve original research and analysis and, where appropriate, the use of existing reports, data and information regarding economic development. This includes Sharon's Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Plan completed in July 2002 and the Multi-Municipal

Comprehensive Plan completed by Spotts, Stevens, McCoy, Inc., and the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission and adopted by the City of Sharon in 2009.

Further, the research phase will involve completion of a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). This is to be accomplished through a written survey of diverse groups including community residents, businesses, students, local government and school district representatives, county business and economic development leaders and leaders of the City's churches and synagogues.

The survey will be available for completion and submission electronically at the City of Sharon's web site www.cityofsharon.net. Hard copy of the survey will be available at the Shenango Valley Library, Sharon, PA. Other locations to pick up the survey will be announced in the future. Completed surveys can be hand delivered or mailed to the City Manager's office at the City of Sharon, 155 W. Connelly Blvd., Sharon PA 16146.

The completion of the SWOT analysis phase will also include a meeting with a targeted focus group for the purpose of an interview to further solicit detailed input and discussion for the SWOT analysis. This is to take place on May 22, 2010, in the Penn State Shenango's Community Room, McDowell Hall, from 8:30 AM until Noon.

This meeting will be facilitated by Philip J. Kennedy, CPA, an Instructor in Business Administration for Penn State University, Shenango Campus. The focus group will consist of 25 representatives of the community appointed by the Commission. Anyone wishing to be appointed to the focus group should contact Sharronda Faber, City Clerk, at the City of Sharon 155 Connelly Blvd or at sfaber@cityofsharon.net. Please provide a letter explaining why you have interest in participating in the group and and relevant contact information.

The second part of the strategic planning process will include a strategic visioning phase. Building on the information gathered in the research phase, the second phase of the processing will involve a meeting with the established focus group in a public forum to:

- Develop a comprehensive vision for the City
- Create action steps to achieve the vision including but not limited to:
 - adoption of desired general economic development strategies and opportunities
 - future land uses and areas for industrial and commercial development,
 - establishment of policies and procedures to accomplish the vision
 - identify transportation and infrastructure issues and needs and look for opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation
 - identify opportunities to apply state grant, loan and economic stimulus programs in an appropriate manner to achieve the City's vision

Wherever possible, the strategic planning process will attempt to facilitate transparent notification and disclosure of the process with the community using public websites and the media.

When complete, the strategic plan will be presented to Council and the greater community for adoption.