

5/23/16

My name is Hilary White

Thank you for hearing me tonight. I am here in support of Overtime brewery and to ask the Council and staff to do whatever you can to get this business open as quickly as possible.

I also want to take this opportunity to encourage you all to look at Overtime's experience within the framework of the City's economic development goals. I think we should use this situation to critically examine how effective we have been at implementing our economic development plan. While I appreciate the efforts of staff and the Council towards this end, I think we can all agree, there is always room for improvement.

One of the stated goals of the City's economic development strategy from 2014 is to "proactively recruit new business." The first item on the list of tactics for implementation is to make city hall more business friendly by establishing a "business friendly" City permit/license process, which includes: better customer service and coordination between Community Development, Finance and Public Works, especially for development and business license reviews and approvals, as well as making the business permitting/licensing process easier to navigate.

I heartily agree with the goals of promoting and supporting the development of small businesses as a integral part of our economic development strategy. Businesses don't just pay their fees and then cease to generate revenue for the city. They continue to generate revenue through taxes, job creation, and community development until the day they close their doors. The proprietors of Overtime Brewery are doing our town a service by investing in the creation of a new business and remodeling an existing building in an area of town that has experienced few improvements over the years. The potential for revenue creation from this business is huge.

Using this case as an example, let's figure out, very practically, what went wrong and what we can do to improve the process to actually encourage and facilitate new business.

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A few questions I think should be asked are these:

Why are capacity fees assessed as a one time fee before a business even opens its doors? Could this fee be assessed annually, at a lower rate, instead?

Where were the communication breakdowns? How is the communication between departments and how is important information communicated to the applicant?

We're there any conflicts or significant limitations within the code that were identified while working on this project?

Are our fees a significant barrier to people opening small businesses?

Do our laws discourage creativity and diversity?

How many times has a particular fee discouraged a potential new business from opening or existing business from relocating?

I would like to see the City assemble comprehensive business start-up guides for different types of businesses that clearly outline the permitting process (across departments,) the fee ranges to make the process easier in the future.

Let us help you.

Thank you!

Sincerely Hilary White