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Groups support charter changes

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by Laura Freeman

Reporter

Hudson -- While the city cannot take a position on two City Charter amendments, two business-related organizations say residents should vote for them on Nov. 3.

The Hudson Area Chamber of Commerce and the Hudson Economic Development Corp. both support Issues 19 and 20, a pair of City Charter changes that city officials have said will make the city's economic development process quicker and more focused.

The amendments were recommended by a city-appointed volunteer committee which reviewed the city's Land Development Code in search of ways to make the approval process quicker and more predictable for developers in a pair of industrial zoning districts in Hudson.

Jill Bacon-Madden, president of the Hudson Economic Development Corp., which promotes economic growth in Hudson and the reduction of the tax burden on residents, said the organization "absolutely" supported both issues.

"They'll be a huge help to economic development," Bacon-Madden said. "They help to shorten the time period for developers to pursue their projects."

Bacon-Madden said the changes are needed in

districts 6 -- on Hudson's west side where the Hudson Crossing Industrial park stands vacant -- and 8 -- in the city's southwestern corner where the city is hoping to develop the property near the Seasons Road/Route 8 interchange. The changes maintain Hudson's strict standards and don't affect its historic areas, she said.

"It will make the process of approving development projects simpler and less time consuming for businesses interested in locating there," Bacon-Madden said.

The Hudson Area Chamber of Commerce endorsed the charter amendments in an Oct. 26 press release.

"The proposed amendments will provide essential changes that will serve to advance economic development in these industrial districts, thereby, improving our commercial tax base," said William Koke, chairman of the Hudson Area Chamber of Commerce board. "The adoption of these recommendations will permit projects to move through the existing approval process with greater efficiency, while continuing to maintain the high-quality standards that are the benchmark of our community."

City officials say they cannot endorse the amendments, but want to educate the public about the changes, which they say could reduce the approval process by 50 days for developers in districts 6 and 8.

Communications Manager Jody Roberts and Economic Development Director Chuck Wiedie will appear on numerous media outlets beginning Oct. 29 to explain the changes to the city's Charter.

Residents can view the city representatives on Hudson Cable TV and a Youtube site at www.youtube.com/cityofHudsonOH.

"We want residents to understand what they're voting for and how this affects the economic development process," Roberts said.

Roberts says the city's approval process is much slower than its neighbors.

"When they compared us to other municipalities, our time frame of completing a new development project from start to finish was nearly double than other cities and very frustrating to developers," Roberts said. "This committee looked at industrial districts 6 and 8, and these changes will not affect the historic district or residential districts."

The amendments won't lower the high standards for development, Roberts said. It just shortens the time period, allowing good projects to move through the system faster, she added.

Issue 19

Issue 19 on the ballot is a proposed Charter Amendments to shorten the approval time by eliminating a public hearing before the planning commission votes on extending streets or creating subdivisions in the industrial and office zoned areas.

"By eliminating the public hearing for street extensions in industrial subdivisions, it will shorten the approval time as much as 20 days while still allowing opportunities for public comment at planning commission meetings," Roberts said.

Neighboring property owners would still be notified by mail and with signs on the property about the project and street zoning changes.

Issue 20

Issue 20 on the ballot is a proposed Charter amendment giving a planning commission subcommittee authority to review and approve zoning certificate applications in industrial and office zoning districts instead of the architectural and historic board of review. The subcommittee would consist of one planning commission member and two members of the AHBR.

Roberts said the change would eliminate 30 days from a project process.

"While going through the planning commission, it's going through the subcommittee of planning commission where AHBR members can make comments," Roberts said. "It's a more expedited way to get through the system."

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