



## **Economic Development Commission**

### **MINUTES**

March 15, 2022

Newtown Senior Center  
Multipurpose Room - A  
8 Simpson St

**Present:** Peter McLoughlin, Bruce Walczak, Steve Matiatos, Fran Pennarola, Barbara Snyder, Valerie Fallon, Nick Roussas, Tracey Pertoso

**Absent:** Jeffrey Robinson

**Also Present:** Kim Chiappetta – Economic & Community Dev & Fairfield Hills Coordinator (clerk)

**Public Attendance:**

Donald Leonard, Tulio Lopez

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

**Public Participation:**

Mr. Don Leonard and Mr. Tulio Lopez introduced themselves and informed the Commission that they are residents of Newtown and live in *Liberty at Newtown*. Both were in attendance to discuss and find information on the proposal for a 344,880 sq. ft. warehouse on Hawleyville Road, and to learn more about the EDC. Mr. Lopez expressed his concern that allowing a large industrial building in a residential area will result in a dramatic change to the community. He informed the group that he served 8 years on the Water Pollution Control Authority in Brookfield and understands that the Inland Wetlands Commission approved the warehouse concept because of the regulations. Mr. Lopez added that he was able to obtain a copy of the traffic study, but it did not indicate who were the tenants of the warehouse and questioned how the traffic study was done without knowledge of the tenants and their frequency of business. Mr. Lopez asked the EDC if they were aware of the tenant. Members replied that they were not. Mr. Lopez continued to tell the group of a similar traffic study that was done in Norwalk and when the business arrived traffic was 4 times the projected number. Vice Chair, Barbara Snyder, explained that the EDC serves as an advisory committee. Fran Pennarola clarified that the only time the EDC interfaces with a developer is when someone wants to submit a business incentive. Mr. Leonard explained that he understood the EDC's interests are to promote development in the town but noted that Newtown is suburban and historic town and should experience a balance of growth with the things that make Newtown a special place. He continued to explain that the thing that is driving this groundswell of opposition is trying to image a 345,000 sq. foot warehouse with 76 truck bays, parking for 50 trailers, parking for 350 cars in a residential area. He could imagine this type of project in a more industrial area of Newtown, but not on this wetlands property in the middle of a residential area. Mr. Lopez added that he and Mr. Leonard are meeting with commissions like the EDC in order to create documentation as to the steps they have taken to make everyone aware that a mistake is going to be



made in the sense of development, and in the sense of income for the town. Both thanked the EDC for their time. Members discussed the public's concerns with the project size, and the number of large trucks and vehicles associated with the business. They also discussed the property and vehicle taxes that will be collected.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Fran Pennarola made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from February 15, 2022. Tracey Pertoso seconded. Motion passed with all in favor. Nick Roussas and Valerie Fallon sustained.

**Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates:**

Kim Chiappetta reminded the Commission that the Town is joining the regional affordable housing plan being documented by WestCOG. As part of the process there will be 3 public meetings held to review the plan where members of the public can ask questions and provide their input. Meetings are scheduled:

Wednesday, March 30<sup>th</sup> from 6:30PM to 7:30PM

Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup> from 6:30PM to 7:30PM

Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup> from 11:00AM to 12:00PM

Mr. Walczak asked if the same information will be covered in all 3 meetings. Kim replied that she believes that will be the case, but it may be beneficial to attend all three to hear the public input. Kim will be posting information on the town website once it's available.

**Member Comments and Questions:**

**6 Commerce Update:**

Fran had nothing new to report and explained that he didn't believe there would be anything new until the developer gets to Planning & Zoning. Barbara said she has seen work progressing on the driveway as they work their way to get across the water.

**Member Project(s) Update:**

None.

**Business additions resident feedback (cont'd):**

None.

**Vacant commercial space and Business Zones Observations (cont'd):**

Valerie report that two new restaurants will be coming into the Borough. An Indian restaurant will move into the old Dere Street location, and an Italian restaurant will be moving into the former Panificio location in the Village at Lexington Gardens. Nick told members that another restaurant will be moving into the Figs location in Sandy Hook. Members also discussed Station 25 in Waterfall Plaza and the opening of The Quarter.

Barbara reminded members of the Experience Newtown event and how it was free advertising for restaurants and businesses. She spoke with a couple of restaurants on the event but did not receive



much feedback. As a business owner, Valerie felt the local advertising could have happened a little sooner and that the passport may have had a broad appeal if it included other prizes besides the pool pass.

Peter spoke to restaurants being a big asset in town. The Commission discussed revenue the town receives from restaurants. Fran clarified that the property owner pays the property tax. Nick noted that the restaurant pays a personal property tax to the Town. Barbara talked about the encouragement to make Newtown a restaurant destination.

Bruce asked about the strategic plan. Fran replied that it was recently shared with him to review and make update recommendation. Fran will share his thoughts with Bruce.

**Other Business group adoption (cont'd):**

Barbara noted always welcome if attend other commission meetings and want to report back.

**Other Commissions adoption (cont'd):**

None.

**Business additions resident feedback (continued):**

None.

**Vacant commercial space and Business Zones Observations (continued):**

Nothing new to add.

**Other Business group adoption:**

None

**Other Commissions adoption (continued):**

None

**Chairman & Vice Chairman reports:**

Barbara has nothing to report.

**Adjournment:**

Barbara asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Nick made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m. and was seconded by Tracey.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*