



MINUTES

February 19, 2019

Meeting Room 3 - 7:00pm

Present:

Wes Thompson, Matthew Mihalcik, Nick Roussas, Steve Gogliettino, Cramer Owen, Barbara Snyder, Valerie Fallon, Christal Preszler – Deputy Director Economic and Community Development, Kim Chiappetta – Economic and Community Development & Fairfield Hills Coordinator (clerk)

Absent: Al Roznicki

Public Attendance:

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

Public Participation: none

Approval of Minutes:

Matt Mihalcik made a motion to accept the minutes from January 15, 2019. Barbara Snyder seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Chairman's and Vice Chairman's Reports:

6 Commerce Road:

Cramer informed the group that he sent a note to George Benson, Director of Planning and Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning requesting an update. If they do not have any new information, follow-up with the State will be necessary.

Miscellaneous cross commission activities:

Wes began by telling Commission members of the opportunities to attend various meetings that may have information pertaining to economic development. Some attendance is to represent the EDC and others are for learning/informational purposes. He gave the example of the Livable Community meetings that he has attended. These meetings are the result of an effort that started a year ago to get Newtown in line with the AARP Livable Community program. He described the past meetings and their current efforts. Wes recommended members sign up to receive automated emails of agendas and minutes for meetings such as Planning and Zoning and the Water and Sewer Authority via the ***Subscribe to Our Mailing List*** option on the town website (newtown-ct.gov). You can then scan agendas for topics of interest and attend those meeting. Christal recommended reviewing minutes as they may contain conversations not outlined in the agenda. Wes continued to describe situations where a business or



property owner may need guidance in a process that requires meeting with commissions. Matt noted that meetings may differ depending upon support required. Wes recommended members attend Planning & Zoning meetings for informational purposes. SHOP (Sandy Hook Organization for Prosperity) is another meeting that is beneficial to attend. Christal noted that an EDC representation used to attend these meetings. Wes explained that SHOP is a group of business owners who are similar to a chamber. They also cater to the community and hold many events to liven up the center of town. The group discussed donations to SHOP for Museum in the Streets. Wes asked that if an EDC member attends a SHOP meeting to remind them to spend donated funds and recommend that they begin with smaller items.

Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee discussion:

Wes told the group about Chris Hottois giving a presentation at a Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee meeting from a spot developer's perspective. Spot developers want infrastructure in place before investing in a property, whereas a bigger developer would not be concerned. Wes expressed concerns that the FHMPRC may be overly influenced by one developer's perspective, and wants them to think more broadly. Wes complimented the presentations given in the FHMPRC meetings. He discussed the benefit of bringing in mixed use is that people living in the housing component would be patrons to the businesses and therefore not necessarily take business away from other parts of town. Christal added that these people would also become patrons of other business in town such as the variety of restaurants. The group then discussed the concept of a mini-medical campus that was presented. Wes ended by noting that the question is what is achievable and what does the town want.

Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates:

Fairfield County Commercial Brokers Network - Meeting Update, Commissioner Support:

Videos, Pictures, Food Service, Edmond Town Hall – venue:

Christal told members that Christal, Kim, Barbara and Valerie have met to plan for the Fairfield County Commercial Brokers luncheon. Christal and Kim have also met with Matt to discuss the video. The venue is the Edmond Town Hall Alexandria Room, and a walk through is scheduled with a member of FCCBN. There is a plan to have signage outside directing people to parking. The Culinary at the high school has unfortunately dropped out, so Barbara has been working to obtain pricing from various food establishments. As a fun point, there will be desserts from different business in town. The group then discussed food options and seating. Barbara added that she will be getting a list together of available commercial properties as a hand out. Christal also said that in the meeting with Matt it was determined the video should be used in the background and not as part of the presentation.

Budget Request Status:

Christal explained that the budget request is still pending and that the referendum is the final to-do and is not until the mid to end of April.



In the last budget request, money was pulled out that was requested for clean-up of 28 Glen Rd which is a town owned contaminated property. There is another request for money to clean up 28 Glen Rd in addition to a grant application with Naugatuck Valley COG.

Marketing/Branding:

Christal and Kim spoke with a local marketing company to get ideas. The discussions were around branding, social media and website improvements. The company provided a sample RFP that will be leveraged. The project will probably be broken into branding first then implementation second. The plan is to find a firm that has regional experience and will use a Newtown firm if possible. When there is a short list of branding ideas, the plan is to push it out to social media for public input. The RFP will be communicated via the Chamber, newspapers, etc.

New Business Updates/Ribbon Cuttings:

Christal reminded members that Wes sent out information about the upcoming ribbon cuttings. Main Street Adventures is scheduled for this Thursday. Strength and Grace Boutique is scheduled for Saturday. Nostrano and Sweet Magnolia of CT are both now opened in Plaza South. Wes noted that niche retailers are surviving, and the group discussed how they are becoming a trend and are successful. Reverie Brewing ribbon cutting is scheduled for March 2nd. Wes asked Christal for information on exit 9. Christal told everyone that the proposal for a historical looking building that will contain a gas station and deli. The Community Center & Senior Center are on target to open in June. Asylum Brew Pub is going through final stages of closing for the property. Christal was able to get the State to contribute funds toward remediation.

Member Comments and General Discussion:

Project Updates, Seminar Attendance, and General Discussion:

Wes asked Matt about the Opportunity Workshop. Matt explained that it does not apply to Newtown at all. The State obtained recommendations using the Census tract and then IRS cut out 75% of what was suggested. The remaining 25% are considered opportunity zones, which are very specific. For example, the opportunity zone for Danbury is just Main St. He continued to explain that the capital gains can be invested tax free for 10 years, then pay original capital gains. The appreciation would not be taxed. Wes asked if there were any ideas that could be leverage, but Matt said there really was not.

Nick will be attending the resiliency discussion in Bridgeport which is regarding options for old brown fields.

Wes asked Barbara how deep is inventory of entry level homes in town. Per Barb as of her last check it is running around \$249,000 and explained that it is always lowest December – February. It is at the highest level in June. It is still running along with State statistics that more people are leaving than coming. The market is still slow here, but Newtown is not worse off than rest of state. Darien and

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Rowaten have over 250 houses for sale in a small geographic area. Houses that were previously high priced are selling much lower. From an economic perspective, Newtown is not doing worse than anyone else. Valerie said that it seems Newtown will not pick up until lower Fairfield county picks up. Barbara informed the group that Newtown has been voted # 2 safest town in CT.

Wes asked Valerie if she feels there is a technical labor base of people living in Newtown. Valerie gave the example of someone she knows who had a long commute and was laid off. He is now working in town. The general sense is that Newtown is not devoid of the talent, and that if a tech based business were to establish in Newtown the talent exists here for these jobs.

Nick recommended a Bee Hive type of in incubator business here in Newtown. Wes explained that Christal has been actively involved in conversations regarding a maker space. Christal said you start with community, then find somewhere to put them. The group discussed the benefits of maker space, possible locations and the financial necessary to establish this type of business.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by Matt at 8:14 pm and was seconded by Barbara.

Respectfully Submitted, Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk