



MINUTES

September 15 2020

This meeting was held remotely due to COVID-19 mandates and precautions.

Present:

Wes Thompson, Cramer Owen, Nick Roussas, Jeffrey Robinson, Tracy Pertoso, Christal Preszler – Deputy Director Economic and Community Development, Kim Chiappetta – Economic and Community Development & Fairfield Hills Coordinator (clerk)

Absent: Steve Gogliettino, Valerie Fallon, Al Roznicki, Barbara Snyder

Public Attendance:

None.

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Public Participation:

None.

Approval of Minutes:

Jeffrey Robinson made a motion to accept the minutes from August 18, 2020. Wes Thompson seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates:

Grants:

Christal Preszler began by giving an update on grants. The 28a Glen Rd grant work is already completed and the deadline was today. The LEP and clean-up company maximized work with a small amount of money. All hazardous liquids are containerized in approved containers and will be taken away soon. After this there will be no liquids remaining on the site, however there is still asbestos and lead remaining. There is \$200,000 in next year's fiscal budget to continue the clean-up. There is also a request for \$650,000 in year 2 for a more complete clean-up including the demo of 6 buildings.

Recently, two grant applications have been submitted. One is for a cemetery grant in the amount of \$2,000 which will allow for the clean-up of a cemetery. The second is a STEAP grant for heritage trail project. Both Flint Ridge Development and SHOP have made generous donations to the project. Chairman Cramer Owen asked when the work would begin if all funding is in place. Christal said that the STEAP grant allows 3-years to complete the project so there is plenty of time to complete the work.



Kim Chiappetta told members that last week prospective Design firms gave presentations for the EDA grant funded replacement of the sanitary sewer on the Fairfield Hills campus. The firm Luchs, DeCarlo & Doll have been selected for their extensive experience with brownfields and the EDA.

Kim then told the group that the final paperwork for the CT DOH Affordable Housing Plan Technical Assistance grant has been received from the State. She and Director of Planning, George Benson, will be meeting to discuss next steps.

FH Residential:

Christal told Commission members that the FH Residential question is set to be on the November 3rd referendum. There is still some minor work being done on the wording. An eBlast will be sent out to recap what has already been covered in the First Selectman's Fairfield Hills Forum meetings. The Legislative Council has approved the wording for question. Vice Chair, Wes Thompson, added that the explanatory text is on tomorrow night's Legislative Council agenda for approval. The group discussed the clarity of the text and how there is some confusion among the residents on exactly what they are agreeing to.

Businesses and Interests:

Christal continued to tell members that on the business front, Boost Bowls is opening soon in the Big Y plaza. Tracy Pertoso explained to everyone that Boost Bowls is a healthy food option and that many people are excited to see them come to town.

Economic and Community Development has received a number of calls with interest for various uses of the Fairfield Hills campus as well as other locations in town which has been encouraging. Advance CT and the State have also been connecting with E & CD.

E & CD is continuing with plaza promotions. Christal spoke with Alden of Edens (the management Company for Sand Hill plaza) looking for information on the area. Alden has sent the request to promote Sand Hill plaza to their marketing department. Christal noted that according to Costar, Sand Hill plaza has 75% of its square feet occupied.

Christal told everyone that the new Wheels on South Main Street had a ribbon cutting last week and that it contains a propane fire place and seating area with a view of the back natural landscape.

Branding:

Christal reminded members of the branding project that was presented in the last EDC meeting and informed them that it was presented to BOS last Tuesday. The next steps are the roll-out of the branding, social media consolidation and finally the websites consolidation. Cramer asked if there were any additional requirements from BOS or any



other boards or commissions. Christal explained that the rebranding is an Economic and Community Development project only so no other approval is required.

General Discussion:

Cramer asked if anyone had the opportunity to speak with local businesses. Commission member Jeff Robinson told the group he visited 4 businesses, two of which, Newtown Convenience and Fizio therapy, had been shut down for a significant time and were significantly impacted. Both businesses applied for and received PPP funds which were a great help to bridge the gaps from when they were closed to when they were able to re-open. Due to social distancing requirements, Fizio has had to adjust the number of clients they are able to see. A staple of business for Newtown Convenience was people grabbing their morning coffee, donut and newspaper before work so the business is still impacted as many people continue to work from home. Jeff then told everyone that Newtown Hardware has actually been very busy because people are creating work and study places in their homes. Cramer added that stock prices of home improvement stores have been doing very well showing that many people are making home improvements.

Kim reported on behalf Steve Gogliettino that he visited Big Buddha and spoke with owner Bryan Roth and found Big Buddha is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Bryan told Steve that he is happy to see some development in the exit 9 business sector. Bryan was able to easily convert his business to curbside service when the pandemic hit and has followed the guidelines for reopening. Big Buddha's business has remained steady.

Cramer mentioned to members that he had heard of some complaints that NewSylum was having issues with properly controlling patrons including the lack of social distancing, but he had not seen an issue first hand. Other members said they have not seen a problem first hand either. One of the owners, David Kingsley, told Cramer that business is good and that they are waiting for the State to provide information on how to run their business when it's cold outside. The group discussed that this will be the same issue for restaurants. Nick Roussas said the Governor made a statement that for the foreseeable future restaurants will not allowed past 50% capacity. The group discussed the impacts to businesses in the cold weather months and the uncertainty regarding states rules and how will be implemented.

Cramer ended the general discuss telling the group he talked with the First Selectman briefly and they are planning to try to reach out to larger industrial businesses in the next month.

Chairman and Vice Chairman Reports:

6 Commerce Rd Update:

Cramer informed everyone that conversations with the Hubbard Foundation are continuing regarding the easement to build a driveway to their property. They are reviewing their options and there are a number of open issues being discussed. There has been no decision yet.

Newtown Municipal Center
3 Primrose Street
Newtown, CT
www.newtown.org



Cramer told Commission members that he is seeking nominations for commercial real estate people to market and sell the 6 Commerce Rd property. He is looking for commercial realtors in the Newtown area who have extensive experience in marketing. He reminded members that the EDC is the developer on record. The EDC will forward their recommendation for a realtor and sale price to the Board of Selectman for review. Once an offer is received for the property there will be a more formalized process with the Board of Selectman and possibly Board of Finance and Legislative Council to get approval to accept offer from qualified buyer.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by Nick at 7:54 pm and was seconded by Jeff.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*