



MINUTES

November 17, 2020

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

**Present:**

Wes Thompson, Jeffrey Robinson, Cramer Owen, Tracey Pertoso, Valerie Fallon, Steve Gogliettino, Barbara Snyder (joined 7:28 p.m.), Christal Prezler – Deputy Director Economic and Community Development, Kim Chiappetta – Economic and Community Development & Fairfield Hills Coordinator (clerk)

**Absent:** Al Roznicki, Nick Roussas

**Public Attendance:**

None.

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

**Public Participation:**

None.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Wes Thompson made a motion to accept the minutes from October 20, 2020. Valerie Fallon seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Jeffrey Robinson made a motion to accept the minutes from November 4, 2020. Valerie Fallon seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

**Vote on 2021 meeting calendar:**

The group reviewed the 2021 meeting calendar previously distributed by the clerk.

Valerie Fallon motioned to accept the 2021 meeting calendar. Wes Thompson seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

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

**CIP:**

Christal Prezler began by telling the Commission that the Fairfield Hills residential question passed in the referendum. The process will now move forward. The Director of Planning, George Benson, is drafting regulations that will be reviewed and then moved on to the Board of Selectmen. Once approved by the Board of Selectmen, the process will then move on to Planning and Zoning. Chairman Owen expressed that this was great



news. Christal added that the town has been approached by more developers expressing interest in the campus.

**Grants:**

Christal told everyone that the town has been awarded a STEAP grant for \$128,000 which will be used to work on the 7 Glen Rd property which is owned by the town from a tax lien foreclosure. The location is a brownfield and is part of the Heritage Trail in Sandy Hook. Grant funds will be used to pave a parking lot which will mitigate the contaminants and provide a location for safe additional parking. The Sandy Hook Organization for Prosperity (SHOP) will add attractive amenities that are part of the Heritage Trail. This is a multi-year grant so work will be done over time. The Heritage Trail will be composed of a walkable trail and signage that will educate on the area's history.

Jeffrey Robinson asked if Newtown qualifies for brownfield grants for the buildings on the Fairfield Hill campus that may be repurposed for residential properties. Christal gave an example of the NewSylum building which had asbestos tiles on the roof. The town received \$30,000 in grant funds from the State for the safe removal of the roof. In the case of a larger building, the town would partner with a developer on grant applications. Jeffrey asked if a grant match was required. Christal replied that it is generally not a requirement.

Christal continued to tell members of the Town's award of a State Neglected Cemetery grant which will be used to repair grave stones at the Cold Spring Cemetery in Botsford, and the potential for a town match of the funds. Cramer told members how costly this type of work is and that it requires a specific expertise.

Kim Chiappetta updated members that work on the Affordable Housing Plan, (funded by the Affordable Housing Plan Technical Assistance grant) is on hold pending a tool kit that is to be distributed by the State. This tool kit will be used to draft the RFQ to hire an expert to write the plan. She continued to update members on the EDA grant telling them that a soft copy of the Architectural and Engineering contract documents have been forwarded to the EDA for approval. Once the contract has been approved, the A/E team can begin the design.

**Businesses:**

Christal informed members that the application for the CT Cares small business grant was made available Thursday evening. This grant is \$5,000 for smaller businesses.

Economic and Community Development is partnering with Parks & Recreation, and IT to do town wide holiday displays. Businesses and organizations will create storefront displays to encourage people to visit these locations. In addition, groups who adopt a lamppost in Sandy Hook Village will be given a free lamppost to decorate on the Fairfield



Hills campus. This event gives the chance to have fun while making everyone aware of the local businesses. This event will be highlighted in social media and press releases. Visitor will have the opportunity to vote on their favorite display.

The plaza promotions continue with the most recent being Eton Center, home to Caraluzzi's, Bottle Stop & Barnwood Grill.

Christal made the group aware that Kim Chiappetta is working on marketing part of which is specific to restaurants promoting take-out. Marketing also includes shops and health and wellness services. The next social media promotion will be for sweet treats marketing local bakeries and chocolate makers. Marketing will also include some print.

***Budget:***

The next topic discussed was regarding the Economic and Community Development 2021-2022 budget. Christal explained that all departments were asked to hold budgets tight. The budget request is around \$40,000 and there will be no increases. The only change is that money from the branding project will be rolled into the website consolidation project. The group discussed the budget. Wes Thompson explained the budget process and that the EDC does not approve the budget, but can lobby for more funds for the Economic and Community Development department if they feel it is important. Wes also reminded members of the grant funds obtained by the department.

**Member Comments and Updates:**

Wes told members that he and Jeffrey walked the Deep Brook property, and offered to take other members who are interested.

Valerie Fallon told members that she updated the Economic Development Commission Business Visit Tracking with businesses she recently visited in Plaza South which included Nostrano, Subway, Brand Cigars and Cork & Barrel. Valerie noted that Sugar Magnolia was closed at the time she had visited. Nostrano is still doing well with take-out. The manager at Subway said they are doing ok and there are no needs at this time. Cork & Barrel expressed concerns with the number of restaurants in town. Valerie also visited Persnickety Bride whose owner, Denise Buzy-Pucheu, is looking for a larger space. This business does more than just bridal such as premium gifts. Christal and Commission members thanked Valerie for visiting the businesses.

Tracey Pertoso added that she also visited Cork & Barrel, and visited Jewel of Himalaya whose business is doing great and has brought life into the plaza.

Cramer asked Valerie for an update on SCORE. Valerie explained that she works with SCORE in an administrative role and hasn't attending a meeting in quite some time. She found out from a SCORE mentor that there are still people expressing interests in starting businesses. Wes noted that the numbers of consultation requests are down.



Steve Gogliettino informed the Commission that his term is expiring in January and will not be seeking re-appointment. The December meeting is his last. Members thanked Steve for his time on the Commission.

The group then discussed the move back to Phase 2.1 and concerns with the Thanksgiving holiday. Barbara asked if the town would follow state guidelines. Christal explained that she is not part of that process, but believes town would follow the State. Commission members discussed how holiday events have changed. Christal told the group that she is working with the Hawleyville Fire Department to see what can be done to have a tree lit in Hawleyville. Barbara expressed that the area has transformed and looks really nice.

Chairman and Vice Chairman Reports:

*6 Commerce Rd Update:*

Cramer updated members that after the town and key EDC members went through the vetting process for a real estate broker for the 6 Commerce Rd property, they received revised advice from the town attorney and management stating that Purchasing had to put out an RFQ. The three original real estate brokers were informed they are invited to bid on the formal RFQ, which is very detailed and requires a significant amount of work. One broker has already said they are not interested, and the other two have not yet responded. If the two remaining brokers decide to not bid, then the EDC will have to work with town to determine next steps. The RFQ, which is due 11/24, was publicly posted so it is possible that another group can come forward. Cramer informed members the Hubbard Foundation is still very interested with moving forward on building the driveway. The broker RFQ and the driveway proposal are being handled separately to keep progressing forward. Cramer added that a number of developers have expressed interest in developing the property, and that these discussions are taking place at the First Selectman and Director of Planning levels.

Cramer ended the Chairman's report by telling members of his difficult decision to resign as the Chairman. Cramer asked members to consider the Chairman role. He will be renewing when his membership is up in January. Wes noted that the meeting following the election is typically the time when the Chair and Vice Chair positions are open. Wes said he would be willing to speak with anyone who is interested in the Chairman role. Cramer told members that Commission member Al Roznicki cannot be reappointed as he has served 2 consecutive terms and asked members to give thought as to who may be interested in joining the EDC.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by Barbara Snyder at 8:07 pm and was seconded by Tracey Pertoso.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*