



Economic Development Commission

Minutes

November 16, 2021

Newtown Senior Center
Multipurpose Room - A
8 Simpson St

Present: Steve Matiatos, Nick Roussas, Valerie Fallon, Wes Thompson, Peter McLoughlin, Barbara Snyder

Absent: Jeffrey Robinson, Fran Pennarola, Tracey Pertoso

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

Public Attendance:

None

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

Public Participation:

None

Approval of Minutes:

Nick Roussas made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from October 19, 2021. Barbara Snyder seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Vote on the 2022 meeting calendar (See attached):

Kim Chiappetta distributed the draft 2022 EDC meeting dates and explained the two optional dates for the December 2022 meeting. Members all agreed upon a date. Chairman Wes Thompson asked for a motion to approve the calendar with the amended date of December 13th.

Steve Matiatos made a motion to accept the 2022 EDC meeting calendar. Peter McLoughlin seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Welcome New Member:

Chairman Wes Thompson began the meeting by welcoming the new member, Peter McLoughlin, to the EDC. Peter told the Commission that his original background is in social policy and more specifically how computers and policy interact in the field of public assistance in New York City and New York State. After this he became a remodeling contractor. Today he is a videographer and expressed how important it is to give back to the town. Wes welcomed Peter to the Commission.



Elections:

Wes explained to the Commission how the EDC is an appointed commission and that it's different from an elected office. For elected commissions and boards, they nominate officers the first meeting after the elections. For appointed commissions and boards the nomination of officers is in December. He asked members to consider if they would like to be appointed to the Chair or Vice Chair positions and to also consider who they would like to nominate for these positions. Peter asked about Wes' departure. Wes explained that according to the ordinance that established the EDC a member can only serve for two terms, then must leave for a minimum of 6 months. In the past, after serving two consecutive terms, he attended meetings as an advisor. The group then discussed the current positions in the EDC as well as the potential for additional positions. Wes gave the example of a past scenario where there were two co-chairs in place of the Chair position. The group then discussed the opportunity for Wes to attend as an advisor.

Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates:

Website Consolidation:

In Christal Preszler's absence, Kim Chiappetta updated the group on the website consolidation project. She reminded the group that currently the Economic and Community Development department has three websites on three separate platforms. At the beginning of the month a narrowed-down list of companies presented to a group including Jeffrey and Barbara. The group further narrowed the list to three companies. The next step is to contact the three companies with questions to obtain additional information necessary in making an informed final decision.

Fairfield Hills Mixed Use Development:

Kim updated the group that work continues of the Fairfield Hills mixed use development project. Currently, three grant applications have been submitted in conjunction with the potential project which are expected to overall better the campus.

Fairfield Hills Sanitary Sewer Replacement Project:

Kim told the Commission that construction bids will be opened this Thursday (11/18) for the Fairfield Hills Sewer Replacement Project. The bids will be reviewed by the design firm who will select the lowest, most qualified bid. This bid will be submitted to the Town for review, and once approved will be submitted to the EDA.

Business Promotions:

Kim informed the group that E&CD is in the process of promoting businesses for the holiday season starting with Thanksgiving. A Thanksgiving page has been added to the NewtownSandyHookEats.com website which will continue to be updated with Thanksgiving specials. There will be a social media promotion for Thanksgiving that will direct to the Thanksgiving page. A similar promotion will be done for the December holidays, but the details have not yet been determined. Peter asked if the E&CD reaches out to businesses for these promotions. Kim explained that the current approach is to review business websites and social media for special offerings. She continue to explain that prior experiences have shown businesses are enthusiastic about the advertising, but are busy running their businesses so this has been the best approach. Wes recommended that when Commission members are visiting local



businesses they mention the opportunity and to contact the E&CD. Finally Kim told the group about the full page ad that will be in this Friday's Newtown Bee Holiday Gift Guide.

Barbara asked if Parks & Rec and the E&CD will be holding the holiday window display contest again. Kim said that an internal meeting is scheduled to discuss this further. It may be difficult to have the same contest this year because of resource constraints.

Wes added that a ribbon cutting is being held tomorrow for a *Nite & Day Sports Cards & Collectibles* located next to Nick's Chilled and Distilled in Sandy Hook Village. He then made members aware that the Design Advisory Board agenda listed an application being reviewed for 35 South Main Street and emphasized the importance of checking agendas to stay informed.

Member Comments and Questions:

6 Commerce Update (*continued*):

Wes reminded members of the letter of support he wrote to P&Z in support of the apartment project on 6 Commerce Road. He told the group about opposition to the project and how the developer responded professionally. Wes said that situations such as this one may present an opportunity for members of the EDC to attend a meeting and speak in support of a project and provide clarification.

The Commission then discussed the Mobil station's request for a drive-thru, which was turned down by P&Z. Members considered the reasons for one business being permitted to have a drive-thru and others not. Wes explained to the EDC that if a business came to the EDC asking for support, the EDC must first review the ordinance, and then determine if they would need or want an exception. Nick Roussas asked if the State passed the regulation that would allow for the State Planning & Zoning to determine regulations for all towns. The group then discussed the negative impacts if this were passed.

Business additions feedback (*continued*) (*See attachment A*):

Wes reminded members of the importance of getting resident feedback on what types of businesses they would like come to Newtown.

Vacant commercial space (*continued*):

Wes continued to explain that having knowledge of vacant building spaces in town will provide an opportunity for the EDC to share the list of desired businesses with the building owner and/or management Company.

Other Business group and pending event feedback:

Wes told the Commission about S.H.O.P., (Sandy Hook Organization for Prosperity), who is very active in Sandy Hook. Members discussed the work being done by S.H.O.P. to stimulate the area including the Heritage Trail Project.

Other Commission and Business Zone adoption:



Barbara reminded the Commission of Flint Ridge Development receiving the CT Main Street Award of Excellence for its preservation and revitalization of the building at the flagpole and for projects in Sandy Hook Village. Wes explained that the EDC and the Town nominated Flint Ridge for the 2019 award.

Wes recommended that going into next year, members adopt a business zone.

Barbara informed the group that she has again agreed to be the Chair of the Newtown Arts Festival in 2022. She has been an auxiliary member of the Cultural Arts Commission. The 2022 Arts Festival is scheduled for Friday, September 16th through Sunday, September 18th. This event draws on average 6,000 attendees. Barbara continued to tell the group that she and another member have submitted Arts & Humanities grant applications, which if awarded will be used for websites. The goal is to become the premier arts festival in Fairfield County. Nick told members about the 2021 Bridgeport Arts Trail event that he found brought people from other towns who then visited and supported local businesses including his diner.

Valerie told the group about the *Very Gifty Christmas* that was held at the NYA where vendors sold merchandise. The Community Center is also holding a similar event called *Sip n' Shop*. Members discussed events and how they benefit other businesses in town.

Chairman's Closing Comments:

Wes reminded members to get ready for the EDC Chair and Vice Chair election next month.

Adjournment:

Wes asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Barbara Snyder made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. and was seconded by Valerie Fallon.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*

NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER
3 PRIMROSE STREET
NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT 06470
TEL. (203) 270-4276
FAX (203) 270-4205



NEWTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING DATES – 2022
(AND JANUARY 2023)

Time: 7:00pm
Day: *3rd Tuesday of each month
Location: *Newtown Municipal Center
Shared meeting room 3
3 Primrose Street
Newtown, CT 06470

February 15

March 15

April 19

May 17

June 21

July 19

August 16

September 20

October 18

November 15

December 13th

January 17, 2023

*Unless otherwise specified on the agenda.

*Google Meets will be held when in person meetings are not possible.