

Newtown Municipal Center  
3 Primrose Street  
Newtown, CT  
[www.newtown.org](http://www.newtown.org)



## **Economic Development Commission**

### **MINUTES**

February 15, 2022

Newtown Senior Center  
Multipurpose Room - A  
8 Simpson St

**Present:** Steve Matiatos, Tracey Pertoso, Fran Pennarola, Jeffrey Robinson, Barbara Snyder, Peter McLoughlin, Bruce Walczak

**Absent:** Valerie Fallon, Nick Roussas

**Also Present:** Christal Preszler - Deputy Director Economic and Community Development, 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:**

Tracey Pertoso noted that the January 18, 2022 meeting minutes, (under Economic and Community Development – Staff Updates – Brownfield Round 14 grant), incorrectly stated Christal Preszler received a letter from the Department of Housing, but the letter was actually from the State Department of Economic and Community Development.

Barbara Snyder made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from January 18, 2022, as amended. Fran Pennarola seconded. Motion passed with all in favor. Bruce Walczak sustained.

### **Welcome New Member:**

Jeffrey introduced the new EDC member, Bruce Walczak. Bruce told the group that he has lived in Newtown for 32 years. He has worked in business for 50 years, and currently runs his own small relocation business. Bruce then told members that he has been active in many local non-profits including the Lions Club, the Family Counseling Center, the United Way, Multiple Sclerosis, and Junior Achievement. Bruce was a member of the EDC 10 years ago, and feels his background and interest continue to be a great fit with what the EDC does.



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

#### **Experience Newtown event:**

Christal Preszler began by telling the Commission of the upcoming *Experience Newtown* event that is a coordinated effort with Parks and Rec. This event is being held to draw patrons from in and outside of town into local businesses and restaurants during a slower time of year. Christal complimented the marketing graphic designed by Land Use Secretary, Helen Fahey. Marketing is composed of posters, a banner, and various newspaper ad in both print and digital. All marketing will direct people to NewtownSandyHookEats.com capitalizing on the work done on the website by Kim Chiappetta. To motivate patrons, Parks and Rec Assistant Director Roseann Reggiano produced the concept of a passport where after visiting six different businesses a person can hand-in their passport for a chance to win a Parks and Rec pool pass. Businesses may also have offerings to pull people into their locations. Barbara Snyder has been assisting by visiting local businesses with information about of the event. Business owners only need to sign, initial, or stamp visitor's passports. Christal thanked Barbara and Helen for the numerous businesses they visited.

#### **Partnership with the C.H. Booth Library:**

Economic and Community Development is also partnering with the C.H. Booth Library Adult Services librarian Shari Merrill for an online seminar titled, "What can SCORE do for you? ", being held on March 3rd. The webinar will be shared in E&CD's eBlasts. Christal expressed how she liked working with Shari and looks forward to more coordinated activities in the future.

#### **Fairfield Hills Residential Project:**

Barbara asked for an update on the Fairfield Hills residential project. Christal explained that the town is still going through the historic process. She recently spoke with Preservation CT, DECD and the State Historic Preservation Office. She continued to explain that the process is not a well-worn path, so conversations continue. The historic designation is necessary to allow for tax credits necessary to fund the project. Bruce Walczak told the group that he has learned in conversations with the First Selectman that the remaining, vacant campus buildings would have to remain up for 10 years. Jeffrey Robinson explained that the remaining buildings would have to be left up 5 years after the completion of the project, plus the estimated 5 years to complete the development projects totals to 10 years. Christal said there is no movement at this time, but there are discussions about other properties that are on the historic register and have done demolition. People involved in the conversations are trying to figure out the best way to move forward. Christal also pointed out that there needs to be a better understanding of what it means for the remaining vacant buildings to remain standing for 5 years. Could these buildings be remediated during that time? The town will not do anything to jeopardize the developers tax incentives. If town does not move forward with this project, then all or most buildings will be taken down. Jeffrey added that each building will need to be remediated before demo. Christal pointed out if the project does not move forward all grant funds will be lost. The group then discussed aspects of the project moving forward and not moving forward.

#### **Affordable Housing Plan:**

Jeffrey asked Kim to provide a status update on the Affordable Housing Plan. Kim explained that the Affordable Housing Plan is a requirement by the State for each town to document their plans for



expanding affordable housing. The Town of Newtown has joined a regional plan being drafted by WestCOG with separate sections being documented by individual towns for their specific plans. Kim has been working with the Director of Planning, George Benson, on the first rough draft which is almost completed. Bruce asked if there has been any movement at the state level on expanding the definition of affordable housing. Kim explained that the state has not expanded what qualifies as affordable housing. She further explained that even if the definition is expanded the property owners must deed restrict the property for 30 years. In the case of rental units, a property owner is responsible for an annual verification of income for each rental tenant which ensure tenants still qualify for the affordable unit. This is an additional cost for the property owner.

**Website Consolidation Project:**

Jeffrey asked for a status update on the website consolidation project. Christal explained for the new members that this project is to consolidate three websites managed by Economic and Community Development. She explained that the contract has been signed. Tracey recommended getting ahead of the rumor mill by sharing that a local business has been selected for the project. Christal expressed that she is more than happy to discuss concerns over the phone or in person.

**Member Comments, Discussion, and Questions:**

**6 Commerce Update (cont'd):**

Fran Pennarola provided a status update of the 6 Commerce Road property. The town's involvement in the property will end once the gas and water lines have been installed. The Developer must go back to the Inland Wetland Commission with their design adjustments that were necessary because of ledge that was encountered. The developer will then have to return to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

**Member Project(s) Update:**

None

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

Jeffrey asked if there was anything people would like to see that was not on Valerie's list. Tracey said she still sees on social media that people want a Trader Joes. Barbara emphasized requests for activity places for both kids and adults.

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

Nothing new to add.

**Other Business group adoption:**

None

**Other Commissions adoption (*continued*):**

None

**Chair & Vice Chairman reports:**

The Vice Chair had nothing to report.



Jeffrey told the group that he was asked what should be done if a member of the EDC is invited to a different commission's meeting to talk about the EDC. Jeffrey said that he still needed some time to think about this but would explain that the EDC works to grow the commercial tax base. Fran added that the EDC tries to facilitate growth in the Town. Bruce recommended the Commission create an elevator speech to ensure all Commission members speak to the same points. The group continued to discuss the mission of the EDC. Bruce said he believes the ordinance speaks to the EDC being an advisor.

Tracey informed everyone that Station 25 is now opened in former 5 Guys location.

Jeffrey reminded members of the article emailed by Nick Roussas about Amazon's lease of property in Monroe to park vehicles overnight. The vehicles will be listed at the Monroe address and therefore the Town of Monroe will collect vehicle taxes. In addition, Amazon will be building a 10,000 square foot building for a locker room and break room for Amazon employees. Members further discussed the project. Fran said that Amazon must declare what is being stored at the location for personal property tax.

Fran informed members that Country Campers was sold. Jeffrey said this will hopefully make it a stronger business.

**Adjournment:**

Jeffrey asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Barbara made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m. and was seconded by Tracey.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*