



Economic Development Commission

MINUTES

June 21, 2022

Newtown Municipal Center
Shared Meeting Room 3
3 Primrose St

Present: Valerie Fallon, Nick Roussas, Jeffrey Robinson, Peter McLoughlin, Bruce Walczak, Fran Pennarola, Steve Matiatos, Barbara Snyder

Absent: Tracey Pertoso

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

Public Attendance:

None.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Public Participation:

None.

Approval of Minutes:

Fran Pennarola made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from April 19, 2022. Valerie Fallon seconded. Motion passed with all in favor. Nick Roussas and Valerie Fallon sustained.

Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates

Kim Chiappetta updated commission members that previously reported updates continue to move forward. With the completion of the Fairfield Hills presentation, she has been able to focus more on the consolidated website project. Both the 7 Glen Road, (Heritage Trail Project), and 28a Glen Road projects are progressing. Valerie expressed her concern with using NewtownSandyHookEats.com for tourism marketing. Kim explained that this website was inherited by the department. It was originally designed to market local restaurants for restaurant week, and was updated over the past five years to attract visitors to Newtown for its restaurants, shops and services. The plan for the new website is to have a tourism type page that will break out restaurants, shops, services and events separately. Bruce Walczak asked if there would be a connection to the library events and explained that the Lions club was able to obtain many volunteers for their Earth Day event through the library. Kim explained that the current plan is to focus on Fairfield Hills events and link to CT Visit, but they could consider linking to the library.

Member Comments and Questions

6 Commerce Update:



Fran updated members that he spoke with the Director of Land Use, George Benson. There is not much new information and the project is moving slowly. Members discussed that they have seen the driveway has now progressed over the wetlands. Barbara added that she has also seen the grass area is mowed where she believes the driveway will continue. Fran said the design of the waterline is still pending completion. There may be some redesign necessary due to rock ledge. Jeffrey added that he learned the memorandum of understanding between the town and developer is to be extended. Members discussed the possibility of a grant to install sidewalks from apartments to Church Hill Rd.

Member Project(s) Update:

Strategic Plan:

Fran reminded the Commission that he shared with them the last version of the Strategic Plan. He also told everyone that George Benson has offered to meet to provide his assistance. Bruce noted that the 2015 plan was large. He has looked at other towns strategic plans and found they do not all have a separate economic strategy. Steve Matiatos told the Commission he is providing his assistance with the New Haven CEDS plan, (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy), in the area of tourism.

Members discussed the disapproval of the proposed warehouse near exit 9. Members also discussed how the public is not exactly clear on what the EDC does.

Business additions resident feedback (cont'd):

None.

Vacant commercial space and Business Zones Observations:

The Commission discussed new ownership of the Sand Hill Plaza and efforts being made to fill vacant spaces.

Other Commissions Observations:

None.

Chairman & Vice Chairman Report/Comments

The Chair, Jeffrey Robinson, told the group about the grand opening of RV One. The business is now owned by a new company, but a member of the former company, Country Campers, has joined the new owners and there is no visible changes. Both Jeffrey and Barbara commented on the beautiful building and the great use of a former vacant, overgrown property.

Jeffrey then told the group of the presentation done by First Selectman to Legislative Council, Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance regarding a historic district for the Fairfield Hills campus. The issue in front of them is to decide to historically designate the campus and preserve all of the existing buildings. The town does not want to preserve all buildings, but only certain buildings. If the mixed use project is able to move forward, after it is finished there is a 5-year period before the town can demolish any historically designated buildings. Jeffrey reminded members of the referendum which approved mixed



use in up to 2 buildings on the Fairfield Hills campus, and explained that the project capital stack requires 25% come from historical tax credits. He clarified that the tax credits come from the federal and state governments, not the town. If the mixed use project does not move forward, the other option that was presented is to demolish all remaining vacant buildings over time. Barbara noted the high cost to the town for the demo.

Adjournment:

Jeffrey asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Barbara Snyder made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. and was seconded by Nick Roussas.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*