



Economic Development Commission

MINUTES

September 20, 2022

Newtown Municipal Center
Shared Meeting Room 3
3 Primrose St

Present: Jeffrey Robinson, Nick Roussas, Fran Pennarola, Tracey Pertoso, Steve Matiatos, Peter McLoughlin

Absent: Barbara Snyder, Bruce Walczak, Valerie Fallon

Also Present: Christal Preszler - Deputy Director Economic and Community Development, Kim Chiappetta – Economic & Community Dev & Fairfield Hills Coordinator (clerk)

Public Attendance:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Public Participation:

None.

Approval of Minutes:

Fran Pennarola made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from July 19, 2022. Tracey Pertoso seconded. Motion passed with all in favor. Jeffrey Robinson, Steve Matiatos and Peter McLoughlin abstained.

Nick Roussas made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from August 16, 2022. Jeffrey Robinson seconded. Motion passed with all in favor. Fran Pennarola, Peter McLoughlin, Tracey Pertoso and Steve Matiatos abstained.

Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates

Restaurant Week:

Kim Chiappetta told the group that the department has been busy marketing *Newtown – Sandy Hook Restaurant Week* scheduled Monday, October 3rd through Sunday, October 9th. This year there will be more social media marketing including *Fairfield After Dark* and *Unlocking Connecticut*. She then told the group that the next step is for the department to visit each restaurant with information on how to notify the town of specials so the restaurants can be added to *NewtownSandyHook Eats.com* which is being used in marketing. EDC members offered assistance and will visit restaurants to let them know about the upcoming restaurant week event. Nick told everyone that people come from towns in southern Fairfield County to eat at Newtown restaurants. Kim will provide the one page restaurant handout to the Commission so that they can share it with restaurants in town.



Website Consolidation project:

Kim informed the Commission that the website consolidation project is progressing slowly. Christal, Kim and Barbara have been working on the project when there is time in between other projects and tasks.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):

Christal Preszler told the group that she is working with a team on updates to the CEDS document. A draft document will be available for the public to review. So far there is nothing too new or different.

45 Main Street - Building behind Edmond Town Hall:

Christal updated the Commission that the project to demo the old fire station behind Edmond Town Hall is moving forward. Oil has been pumped out of the in ground tank, and the tank will be removed. Work should be starting in the next few weeks. This project will be an item on an upcoming Borough agenda.

Fairfield Hills Mixed Use:

Christal updated the Commission on the Fairfield Hills Mixed use project. The Legislative Council and Board of Selectmen approved to give the First Selectman authority to execute an application to the National Parks Service for the Historic Designation of the Fairfield Hills campus. The developer will be submitting the application. The DECD brownfields grants award that was received because of the project has expired, and Christal is looking into the possibility of extending the grant award.

Fairfield County Commercial Brokers Network meeting:

Christal told members that Economic and Community Development is hosting the Fairfield County Commercial Brokers Network (FCCBN) meeting scheduled Friday, September 30th and invited EDC members to attend. The meeting is being held at Reverie Brewing from 12 – 2 p.m. Reverie will be coordinating lunch and set-up and will be providing a proposal in a couple of days. It is expected that there will be 80 – 90 brokers in attendance. Christal said that the goal is to get them to think of Newtown when looking for commercial space.

Rocking the Hook:

Economic and Community Development is sponsoring Rocking the Hook in Sandy Hook on October 1st.

Heritage Trail / 7 Glen Road project:



Christal informed the Commission that the Heritage Trail / 7 Glen Road project was being rebid due to a lack of response. The bid package has been revised and will be reviewed with an internal team on Thursday.

28a Glen Road project:

Christal updated the group that testing continues on the town owned 28a Glen Road property.

Member Comments and Questions

6 Commerce Update:

Fran reported that the driveway is finished at the 6 Commerce Road property. He has been told that the town is waiting to hear about gas loads for lines on the street. A redesign has not been submitted yet.

Director of Planning:

Jeffrey informed the Commission that George Benson is retiring effective the 1st week in December. Members discussed Mr. Benson's contributions to the town and his vast knowledge.

Member Project(s) Update:

Strategic Plan:

Fran explained to the Commission that after reviewing the old strategic plan and looking at plans from other towns, he found it beneficial to begin with the most recent version and make changes. The Commission discussed determining their role and highlighted the Commission taking a more active role in promoting projects that benefit the town. Fran recommended the Commission set goals and determine actions to implement them. Tracey asked about the process to implement the new plan. Fran explained that it will be presented to the Legislative Council with a public hearing, who will then vote on the plan. Fran asked that members review and look at goals. Kim told members that the process of documenting the Strategic Plan may also provide the verbiage they want on the EDC page of the new Newtown Economic and Community Development website currently in development.

Business additions resident feedback (cont'd):

none

Vacant commercial space and Business Zones Observations:

none

Other Commissions Observations:

The group discussed the proposed project to build 220 apartments on route 6 being approved, including the potential impact to schools and traffic. If the EDC is to have an active role in recommending projects they may want to consider impact to the tax base along with the character of the town. Tracey said that it may be necessary to have more apartments available in Newtown to keep up with the aging population so that they do not have to move out of town.



The group then had a brief discussion on the need for affordable housing and the current status of affordable housing in Newtown.

Chairman & Vice Chairman Report/Comments

Requests to meet with other Town Organizations to explain the role of the EDC:

Jeffrey explained to the Commission that once the Strategic Plan is completed, it can be leveraged to create a single message on the role of the EDC that members can share in meetings and conversations.

Jeffrey gave a shout out to Barbara for the successful Newtown Arts Festival. All members agreed that the festival was fun and successful and recognized the hard work of all arts festival volunteers.

Adjournment:

Jeffrey asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Fran made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m. and was seconded by Tracey. All members in favor.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*