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Newtown Economic Development Commission Agenda

Date: Tuesday, April 16, 2024

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Newtown Municipal Center
Meeting room 3
3 Primrose Street
Newtown, CT 06470

AGENDA

- Call to Order and Roll Call
- Acceptance of Minutes
- Public Participation

REPORTS/DISCUSSION and POSSIBLE ACTION:

- Continuation of discussion on possible workshop series collaboration between EDC and ECD.
- Chairman and Vice Chairman Reports/Comments
- Economic and Community Development - Staff Update (*See attachment.*)

ADJOURNMENT

If you plan to attend this meeting and require assisted hearing devices, please contact the Office of the First Selectman at 203-270-4201 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

EDC / ECD progress update 03-16-2024 - 04-15-2024

Prepared by John Voket

Economic & Community Development Director - Newtown / Sandy Hook, CT

Note to EDC: Kimberly Chiappetta is the lead member of our department on numerous projects and initiatives below. She additionally continues to assist, support, and educate the Director in regard to department duties, responsibilities and project particulars - and we continue to function as a team addressing new and ongoing activities related to the ECD Dept. and matters related to Fairfield Hills.

Since my last report to the EDC in March 2024, the ECD Director has been engaged with the following activities. This list is a sampling and does not represent all of the activities and engagements that are part of the director's day-to-day responsibilities:

Latest highlights:

Continuing to build relationships with representatives from a regional ED and revitalization firm with interest in redeveloping at least one remaining usable building at Fairfield Hills. The company's principal and its Property Acquisition Consultant visited and toured the campus April 8 for approx. 2 hours and requested to return and access one specific building to perform a thorough analysis. That return visit is scheduled for later this month.

Established contact with the broker representing and marketing the now vacant and available Cascades Specialty Packaging industrial commercial space on School House Hill Road. A meeting with that rep, his associate, the first selectman and myself is scheduled for later this month.

Continued our support of local residents and officials interested in fast-tracking Rail to Trail connections between Newtown and Monroe adjacent to Batchelder Haz-Mat site. ECD director attended a Saturday, March 30th site visit with a key volunteer, the First Selectman, and a CT State Rep. The ECD director, the volunteer, and State Rep. returned to the site on April 8 joined by a representative from the railroad for another site visit and preliminary discussion on acquiring at least minimal right-of-way privileges so this trail segment could be completed from the Monroe border up to a parcel and planned temporary trailhead area off Swamp Road.

Attended and joined the First Selectman speaking at a CT DECD Brownfields information session at Newsylum on FFH campus April 5. Our dept. Staff interacted with and struck up relationships with a number of key representatives - or re-established relationships with colleagues from the Western CT and Naugatuck Valley COG, the Naugatuck Valley COG's Brownfields Program, several commercial brokers and developers, key staff at the CT DECD, CT DEEP, and the UConn College of Civil & Environmental Engineering Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) team. We made tentative plans to reconnect in the coming weeks to explore various new and existing grant and other funding sources to help alleviate Newtown taxpayers of the full or partial burden of paying for various site clean-up initiatives aimed at returning unproductive brownfields to the local tax rolls.

Continued

Continued our practice of updating First Selectman on interested parties exploring the redevelopment of existing buildings on the FFH campus.

Finalized plans ahead of ECD office co-hosting annual Manufacturers Breakfast, planned for Curtis Packaging on May 14, which will bring approx. 60 regional manufacturing leaders / reps to the community for brief presentations and tours of the Curtis facility, and to hear from speakers motivated to recruit and fast-track workforce candidates for regional manufacturing companies.

Attended and supported the final performance of the Edmond Town Hall spring concert series, which was both well attended by a mix of town and out of town residents - many of whom patronized local food & beverage establishments before and after the show.

Authorized sponsorship supporting the Rock the Hook Music Fest in partnership with Sandy Hook Organization for Prosperity (SHOP).

In the capacity of Newtown/Sandy Hook's rep to the Western CT Tourism District Board - continued pursuing plans to host the state's newly installed Tourism Director and her team for Newtown visit. And began exploring an idea of hosting monthly visits to local businesses and other entities looking to expand promotions locally, regionally, and globally through the CTVisit website and social networks.

Completed the 3rd of 3 Sustainable CT Virtual Equity Training courses toward CCM / CT Municipal Official certification, as well as a separate CCM / CMSC training about "Skills to Make Your Town or City a Better Place to Work and Live."

Made plans to celebrate Newtown Police Det. Sgt Seabrook as he is inducted into the CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence First 100 Plus Class of 2024 - recognizing community leaders working across Connecticut to improve the lives of domestic violence survivors and their children. The ECD Director is planning to attend the event with the First Selectman and at least two other top officials from the NPD.

Continued meeting with and soliciting possible video production company reps ahead of a planned update to the 'Video Tour of Newtown' currently streaming on the municipal website.

Continued work updating memorial offerings and siting them on the FFH campus.

Attended a late stage site visit for the 7 Glen Road brownfield conversion to pocket park, leading to a brief meeting with the Town Engineer and a Sandy Hook business owner regarding expanding an adjacent temporary sidewalk and discussion of minimally adjusting some traffic flow logistics in Sandy Hook village center.

Continued

Attended Agriculture day at the State Capital representing the ECD office and developing contacts and relationships including with the CT Ag Commissioner, CT Nursery & Landscape Assoc., USDA, UConn College of Agriculture and the School Nutrition Assoc. Of CT exploring possible beneficial relationships, partnerships, support and funding for Newtown / Sandy Hook agricultural enterprises.

Attended ConnCON - the CT State Tourism Conference in Hartford to learn about the latest programs and tactics for driving economic benefits to Newtown / Sandy Hook through tourism initiatives. Achieved a one-on-one meeting with the DEEP Commissioner, invited her to visit the community to tour various related project sites, and conducted follow-up correspondence with her and her designees to facilitate the visit and possible funding opportunities for local projects.

Continued attending and supporting a local Safe Streets initiative aiming to identify and develop near-future pedestrian safety measures and installations at FFH, as well as other key locations around town with the statistically highest propensity for traffic collisions. Attended a related webinar hosted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) educating potential Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) grant applicants - specific to pedestrian and bicycle safety initiatives in Newtown / Sandy Hook.

Continuing to grow into the role and handling or delegating requests for service and/or info from the ECD office including:

Organizing and/or producing ribbon cutting activities for new businesses:

- Popup Bagels in Plaza South;
- Solara Solar
- Great Ring Farm
- New Sandy Hook based market (at former Villa site)

Continuing support including calls, meetings, and email correspondence related to:

- 28 A/B Glen Rd. - shadowing town staff collaborating on ongoing environmental cleanup and future development process including attending recent bid review;
- 6 Commerce Road;
- 3 Main Street;
- Fairfield Hills buildings deemed appropriate for reuse and development
- The voter-approved mixed-use development of Shelton and Kent Halls at FFH including the recent endorsement by the CT SHPO for campus historic designation.

Continuing to support recently completed ownership, responsibilities, and content of developing new ECD website (newtown.org) - the EDC pages will be part of the improvements.

Continued

Attended initial meetings focusing on parking and traffic flow issues at Fairfield Hills currently, and as projects, participation, development and growth continues on the campus. Also conducted the first of several introductory meetings with prospective traffic / parking consultants/experts ahead of contracting for an on and campus adjacent parking/traffic study.

Participated with Ms. Chiappetta on the first phase of CT Main Street Center analyses of ECD Dept and other municipal agencies / depts. To discover areas of best practice conformity and areas requiring attention and/or improvement to achieve maximum community development success and benefits.

Continuing occasional posting of interesting news and outreach on our ECD/EDC social sites (Facebook / Instagram)

Continuing to develop, research, design, publish and distribute "Developing News" EDC e-newsletter.

Continued support of the Fair Rent Commission.

Continuing to monitor various channels and solicitations for grants pertinent to specific departments and projects and ensuring related leadership are aware of the grant opportunities and deadlines.

Continuing to act in support of the EDC Strategic Plan and its directives, and interacting with the EDC Chair in respect to developing achievable, measurable outcomes involving mutual support of our office and the commission.

Attended and represented ECD Dept. at a farewell event for outgoing Finance Director Robert Tait - and welcomed incoming Finance Director Glenys Salas, as well as a new staffer in the Health District.