



Economic Development Commission

MINUTES

January 18, 2021

Newtown Senior Center
Multipurpose Room - A
8 Simpson St

Present: Steve Matiatos, Nick Roussas, Tracey Pertoso, Fran Pennarola, Jeffrey Robinson, Barbara Snyder

Absent: Valerie Fallon, Peter McLoughlin

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:

Fran Pennarola made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from December 14, 2021. Barbara Snyder seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates:

Kim Chiappetta provided the staff update in Christal Preszler's absence.

ARPA fund opportunities:

Kim began by telling members that Christal continues to notify the First Selectman of options for ARPA funds as she learns about them. Recently, Christal was made aware of an opportunity to use ARPA funds toward gift cards that would be distributed to those in need to be used at local businesses.

Website Consolidation:

Kim updated the Commission that Newtown based Park Group Solutions was chosen for the website consolidation project. The next step is the contract.

CT Communities Challenge Grant:

Kim told the group that the CT Communities Challenge grant application was submitted on Friday (1/14) for campus improvements such as sidewalk work, paving and lighting of heavily used parking lots and



upgrades to the water system that would be done in coordination with the Shelton House residential project.

Possibility of an Experience Newtown event in February:

Economic and Community Development is working with Parks and Rec Assistant Deputy of Recreation, Rose Ann Reggiano, on an Experience Newtown event where restaurants, shops and personal services will be highlighted.

Possible Home Based Business Get Together:

Kim explained that Economic and Community Development is looking into holding an event to get together with homebased business owners.

Brownfield Round 14 grant:

Kim told the group that Christal received a letter from the State Department of Housing (DOH) in response to the application submitted for the Brownfield Round 14 grant to remediate Kent House in coordination with the residential development project. DOH explained that the application scored well, but the project needs to be shovel ready. The letter encouraged the department to re-apply when the project has progressed further.

Affordable Housing Plan:

Kim explained to the Commission that the State DOH is requiring that each municipality have a plan for expanding affordable housing in their towns that is to be updated every 5 years. The Town has joined a regional plan being developed by WestCOG. She and the Director of Planning, George Benson, met with WestCOG to review the outline for Newtown's portion of the document. The town must submit a final draft to WestCOG between the end of January and beginning of February.

Fairfield Hills Mixed Use Development:

Kim updated the group that the State Historic Preservation Office is requiring preservation of all remaining buildings on the campus which creates some obstacles. Jeffrey explained that both the Shelton and Kent buildings must be designated as historic in order for the developer to obtain the federal and state historic tax credit necessary to make the project work financially.

Video Tour of Newtown:

Kim explained to members that Peter McLoughlin has been assisting on the project and has come up with great ideas on how to improve the Video Tour of Newtown which is currently located on the town webpage. They have been meeting with the company who produces the video, CGI, to begin the process. The video tour is composed of scenic photos of Newtown as well as local businesses. Barbara recommended using a local photographer for the images and leave it up to them to select the businesses. Kim explained that CGI provides the photographer and staff necessary to create the video all for free. They even now have drone videos and photos as an option. In an effort to be fair, Economic and Community Development will be reaching out to businesses via social media and an eBlast asking if any business is interested in having a photo of their business in the video. Kim asked members for recommendations on how to ensure all businesses are given a fair opportunity to participate. Members



agreed with the outreach via social media and eBlast. Tracey recommended that if there is a large response to consider a lottery to select businesses.

Business Visits:

Christal and the First Selectman, along with people from AdvanceCT visited SD Labs located on Commerce Road. SD Labs makes anti-microbial products that control bacteria, fungi and mold. Kim recommended members visit their website to learn more.

Municipal Center Table:

Kim informed members that Access Physical Therapy & Wellness, located on Mt. Pleasant Road, has a display at the Municipal Center display table.

Member Comments and Questions:

6 Commerce Update (*continued*):

Jeffrey began by noting that the 6 Commerce Road project is moving along slowly. Fran explained that the developer is in the process of redesigning the development around ledge that was recently found. The clubhouse will now be located up front. There is progress being made on the driveway, but they still need to work out things with water and power. The utilities trench will be located on the side of the road, not in the middle of the road as originally designed making any necessary future repairs easier. The developer needs to get site plan approval from Planning & Zoning. Tracey asked if the updated design would still have parking under the buildings, accessed at the back. Jeffrey replied that the change in design will still allow for hidden parking.

Member Project(s) Update:

Jeffrey noted that Peter is currently working with Kim on the Video Tour of Newtown update.

Business additions resident feedback (*continued*):

Jeffrey began by noting that this section of the agenda is on-going. He asked if any members had new input. Steve said that his daughter would like to see a zip line in town. Tracey agreed that people are looking for some sort of recreation and noted the many disappointed people when Main Street Adventures was unable to survive the pandemic and closed. Members continued to discuss the need for recreational businesses. Tracey expressed that she was happy to see Mary Golds on Main acting as a venue for weddings and parties and that this was needed in town.

Vacant commercial space (*continued*):

Nothing new to add.

Other Business group adoption and Other Commission adoption:

Jeffrey told the group that he has signed up to receive agendas and minutes from various commissions and boards. Barbara said that she has done the same and browses through the minutes of various meetings. She continued to inform the Commission that there are many Arts and Humanities grant funding opportunities now. Grants are being awarded to various entertainment and art venues helping



many brick and mortar facilities. Barbara explained that cultural arts brings people into towns helping local businesses. She expressed that it is nice to see funds flow into the communities.

Top 30 Tax Payers:

Jeffrey began by explaining the benefits of the Commission understanding the top tax payers and the types of businesses that bring in the most tax dollars. He gave the example of two new apartment complexes being high on the real estate tax list. Members discussed how the type of business should be considered when reviewing an incentive application. Members also discussed how businesses may be broken out for tax and liability purposes. Nick asked if the utility companies pay the same mill rate as other businesses. No one was sure. The group then discussed a warehouse project on a 100 acre parcel off of exit 9.

Nick told the group that Sugar Magnolia bakery closed, and Firehouse Grill is in progress of renovating the former Five Guys location. Barbara added that the Fire House Grill truck was at the Arts Festival so they are already well known in Newtown. Tracey said Sugar Magnolia has quite a following and it seems their closure may be due to the rental costs. She added that they have publicly said they are planning to continue their business. Nick noted that Butchers Best is for sale, and that the Fairfield BD Provisions location has closed, but the New Milford location is doing well. He believes the high rental cost at the Fairfield location may be the reason for the closure.

Adjournment:

Jeffrey asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Nick Roussas made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 p.m. and was seconded by Fran Pennarola.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*