



Economic Development Commission

Minutes

October 19, 2021

Newtown Senior Center

Multipurpose Room - A

8 Simpson St

Present: Nick Roussas, Wes Thompson, Barbara Snyder, Tracey Pertoso, Valerie Fallon, Fran Pennarola, Steve Matiatos

Absent: Peter McLoughlin, Jeffrey Robinson

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:

Fran Pennarola made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from September 21, 2021. Barbara Snyder seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Welcome New Member:

Chairman Wes Thompson began the meeting by telling the group that the commission's new member, Peter McLoughlin, was not able attend this evenings meeting due to a prior engagement. Mr. McLoughlin will be officially welcomed in the November meeting.

Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates:

Newtown-Sandy Hook Restaurant Week:

Christal Preszler updated the Commission on *Newtown – Sandy Hook Restaurant Week* that just ended on 10/10. Many new restaurants participated in Restaurant Week with specials. Some restaurants kept their specials due to the popularity. Kim Chiappetta handled marketing and Helen Fahey assisted with Social Media. Economic and Community Development hopes to hold another Restaurant Week sometime in February of 2022, which tends to be a slower time for restaurants. This will provide marketing for restaurants and a break to the winter for patrons. Economic and Community Development was very happy with the positive feedback and results. The Economic and Community



Development department is helping to support the Parks & Rec Scarecrow Contest with a chef scarecrow marketing Restaurant Week.

Fairfield Hills Mixed Use Development:

Work continues on the Fairfield Hills mixed use development project with discussions on funding.

Fairfield Hills Sanitary Sewer Replacement Project:

Kim Chiappetta updated the Commission on the Fairfield Hills Sanitary Sewer Replacement project. The construction pre-bid meeting is scheduled on Thursday, October 21st. Once bids have been reviewed and a construction company has been selected, the selected bid will be sent to the EDA for review and approval.

Website Consolidation:

Christal continued to inform members that proposals for the website consolidation project have been reviewed. The team has narrowed down to about 7, who will be asked to attend an in-person interview. Christal reminded members that the project is to consolidate the department's 3 websites into 1 cohesive, branded personality. The project will also include recommendations on the department's social media.

GIS:

The Town's GIS Specialist, Christina Woehle, is developing a way to search and sort by buildings size on the Town's GIS application. This ability will be beneficial for cases when AdvanceCT or commercial brokers contact the town for specifically sized available commercial space. Christina will be documenting instructions that Christal will share with members.

Ribbon Cuttings:

Last, Christal told members that there were 3 ribbon cuttings last Saturday, the *Dodgingtown Crafts & Spirits*, *Dodgingtown Market & Deli* and *Indigo Jane Boutique*. Valerie thanked everyone who was able to attend the ribbon cutting for her shop, Indigo Jane Boutique. Members complimented her on the store.

Member Comments and Questions:

6 Commerce Update (*continued*):

Fran Pennarola updated the commission on the 6 Commerce Road property. The buyer has submitted an application for a zoning text change to be applied to the property. Fran explained that the property is zoned for industrial but the requested change would allow for the development of housing for older, independent people. Wes explained that the 6 Commerce Rd property was labeled by the State for commercial development at the time of purchase. He then told members that he plans to write a letter in support of the zone change to Planning & Zoning, as a member of the EDC, not as a representative.

Business additions feedback (*continued*) (See attachment A):

Valerie Fallon's Facebook Response summary was distributed which contained a summary of responses to the question asking what types of businesses residents would like to see in town. Wes told the group



that new Commission member, Peter McLoughlin, also received similar responses when he questioned people in the Dodgingtown area. Both received responses that residents want recreation such as a bowling alley and skating rink. Barbara said that younger people are looking for areas that have both restaurants and activities. The group discussed how Newtown has many events and activities, but they are seasonal. There is not much to do from November to March. Wes added that various interests have come to the Fairfield Hills campus including mini golf, tennis, and skating. Possibly having a business with all of these activities put together may be more financially feasible. The group discussed reasons why businesses would not establish in Newtown including lack of density and the location. Tracy noted that a wedding venue would provide opportunities for other businesses such as a bed and breakfast. Wes told everyone that he is planning to consolidate all of the results and share with the group. Christal said that Economic & Community Development is sometimes approached by developers who ask what types of business the town wants, so this list will be helpful.

Chairman's Closing Comments:

Business Zones (*See attachment B*):

Wes distributed a map of the Newtown Business Districts to the group and ask that members adopt a district and report in meetings if they observe any vacant spaces. Members discussed Commerce Rd, the Taunton Press buildings and Curtis Corporate Park. Christal recommended that members also attend commercial broker meetings as another way to learn of available spaces.

Other Commissions:

Wes told members that he has signed up to have other commission's minutes auto-emailed to him which he reviews to learn about what is going on in town. He gave the example of this coming Planning & Zoning meeting being held on 10/21, where they will be reviewing a referral from the Borough for a special exception for a medical office building. Christal said that keeping yourself informed provides an opportunity to speak out in the beginning of a process and be proactive. Wes recommended that members review agendas first to see if there any items they find interesting, then ensure they read the minutes from that meeting. Christal added that it's beneficial to attend another meeting to see how they work. Wes asked members to consider which business zones they would like to cover before the next EDC meeting.

The group then discussed and agreed upon moving the December meeting to 12/14. (*The 12/21 meeting will be cancelled, and a special meeting will be held on 12/14.*)

Adjournment:

Wes asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Nick Roussas made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. and was seconded by Barbara Snyder.

Newtown Municipal Center
3 Primrose Street
Newtown, CT
www.newtown.org



*Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*

Attachment A

Economic Development Commission

Facebook Response Summary: New Business Query

Prepared by Commission Member: Valerie Fallon

10/12/21

Background:

The EDC members were tasked by the commission's Chair, Wes Thompsen, to conduct some informal research within the Newtown community. Because the research was conducted informally the following is a general summation and not an exact quantification of responses.

Target Audience:

Facebook Group: Nicer Newtown

This group is made up of 2300 Newtown residents

Question provided to Target:

"We're looking for input from other Newtown residents on what types of businesses you would like to see more or in addition to what we currently have?"

Timeframe: Question posted to Group on September 17th. Responses 9/18/21 – 9/24/21

Response Summary:

Overall, most of the suggestions fell under the family recreation or food related services. There were also a number of requests for Big Box discount stores such as The Dollar Tree or Big Lots.

Under the family recreation category the types of businesses most suggested were (listed in hierarchy of the most mentions and Facebook "likes"):

- Bowling alley
- Mini golf
- Arcade
- Ice skating rink
- Something for teenagers
- A sports center

Under the food related category the business types most suggested were (listed in hierarchy of the most mentions and Facebook "likes"):

- Trader Joe's (overwhelming winner here)
- Whole Foods
- Fast food (ie Chopt Salads mention several times)
- Ethnic restaurant (Greek, Ethiopian, French pastry etc)

Attachment A

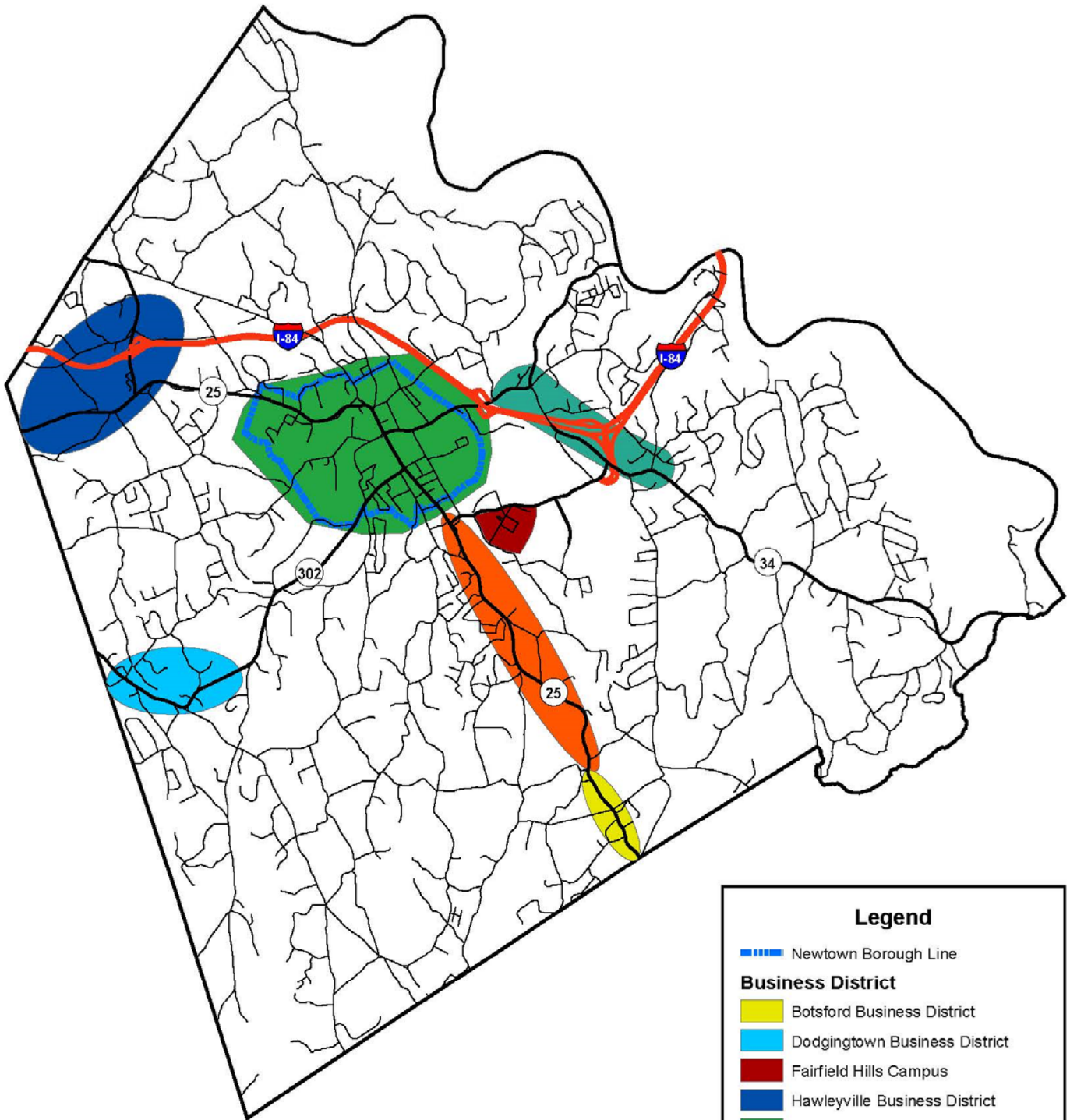
Other business categories suggested included:

- Book store
- Shoe store (ie. Payless mentioned several times)
- Garden center
- Music store, yarn shop, craft store were also suggested

Other Comments:

In addition to the above there were a few additional responses that mentioned manufacturing or other larger business with the thinking that these would bring jobs and/or a higher tax base to the town. There were also several responses that called out Fairfield Hills as a great location for creating a destination for shopping and other family activities related businesses.

Newtown Business Districts



Legend

- Newtown Borough Line
- Business District**
- Botsford Business District
- Dodgingtown Business District
- Fairfield Hills Campus
- Hawleyville Business District
- Newtown Borough Business District
- Sandy Hook Business District
- South Main Street Business District



By using this map and/or data, the user acknowledges and agrees that (i) the Town of Newtown, CT generally limits access to governmental agencies, law enforcement bodies, academic institutions, and other bona fide parties having legitimate need for such data in furtherance of their professional responsibilities, and (ii) the Town of Newtown, CT reserves the right to reject any use at it's sole discretion.

