

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



MINUTES

October 17, 2017

Meeting Room 3 - 7:00pm

Present:

Bob Rau, Al Roznicki, Wes Thompson, Dana Trado, Steve Gogliettino (arrived 7:08 pm), Matthew Mihalcik (arrived 7:12 pm), Christal Preszler – Deputy Director Economic and Community Development, Kim Chiappetta – Economic and Community Development & Fairfield Hills Coordinator (clerk).

Public Participation:

Harry Freeman – Rock Solid Development

Absent:

Amy Dent, Cramer Owen, Scott Orlando, Nick Roussas.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Wes Thompson made the motion to accept the minutes from September 19, 2017 and Matt Mihalcik seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Reports:

Deputy Director Economic and Community Development:

Christal Preszler began by informing Authority members of Newtown – Sandy Hook Restaurant week's success.

She then shifted attention to the Fairfield Hills campus and the removal of Woodbury Hall making land available that can be marketed for economic development. Wes Thompson said that boundaries would have to be defined before the property could be marketed. Steve Gogliettino mentioned the recent zoning change that would allow distilling. Bob asked if there was still an issue with the by-products associated with the process, and Christal clarified that there are workarounds that every brewery must address.

Christal ended her report with letting members know that she was contacted by the agent for Stop & Shop plaza regarding the climate on South Main St.

Business Incentive Plan - Educational Playcare:



Christal introduced Harry Freeman with Rock Solid Development representing Educational Playcare, and explained that the property being discussed is the former Academy Design location on 2 Saw Mill Rd. Mr. Freeman informed the group that he was a former Economic Development Director in Windsor, and is now a principle with Rock Solid development who is developing a site on 2 Saw Mill Rd for Educational Playcare. Educational Playcare is one of the largest daycare providers in the state of CT and this will be their 16th center. They are nationally recognized and are the 24th largest daycare provider in the country. The centers are owned by a husband and wife who have been in this business for since the mid-1980's. Their centers are on the cutting edge of education and security. The facility will hold 250 students. The existing 2 story farm house will be incorporated into the design of the facility which will be roughly a 17,000 square feet building made to resemble a barn. The topography of the area requires a retaining wall at the back. The entrance to the facility will be on Saw Mill Rd. The project had gone through Wetlands and Planning & Zoning in the spring of this year. Mr. Freeman commended the professionalism of the staff and commissions through the process. Wes Thompson asked for confirmation if the project has yet been reviewed by the Water & Sewer Authority, and Mr. Freeman replied that it has not. Mr. Freeman continued to inform EDC members of details of the facility and informed them that site work has begun and that he was unable to present to the EDC at an earlier date due to project circumstances. Wes expressed concerns with the request being presented after the ground breaking, to which Mr. Freeman informed him that with his background he understood that this is an incentive however he did not want to present to the EDC earlier in the event that the project was not going to happen. He continued to inform the group that Educational Playcare will be bringing 45 new permanent employee positions. Bob asked what made Educational Playcare want to build a facility in Newtown. Mr. Freeman replied that the owners are very ethical and were looking to expand into Fairfield County, but did not want to build close to other established daycare facilities who they consider friends. Rock Solid Development found properties for the expansion in Newtown, Southbury and Bethel, and finally decided upon Newtown for its community. The total investment would be 3.5 million dollars in construction. Mr. Freeman described the equipment that will be inside the building and Christal requested estimates of the personal property which will be supplied at a later date. A soft opening is scheduled for next summer, and the facility will opening next fall. Their plan is to be at full capacity in 2 years. Bob thanked Mr. Freeman for his presentation.

Members then discussed how the incentive plan should work and why Rock Solid Development presented after the ground breaking began.

Commissioner's Reports:

Incentive Activities – Wes:



Covered Bridge:

Wes began by reminding members that the Covered Bridge project was not recommended by Board of Finance and that the Legislative Council recommended that the EDC did not move it forward to them. Mr. Lucera expressed his disappointed and met with Pat Llodra and the Chairman of the Legislative Council. The section of property that had been allocated for a restaurant has since been sold to Scalzo. EDC members expressed their concerns with Mr. Lucera opting to go to a higher density to make-up financially.

Assisted Living:

Wes informed members that there was an inquiry by an assisted living facility and that it needs to be determined if an assisted living facility qualifies for the business incentive. Technically he believes this type of facility is considered the same as an apartment complex. Christal added that the EDC needs to discuss if an assisted living facility qualifies for the incentive. Wes added that he has dealt with assisted living facilities personally and said he considers it as an apartment complex as you pay rent, and apartments fall within state programs. Matt Mihalcik expressed that he felt it should be considered a health facility more than an apartment complex as the location is not zoned for apartments so would not qualify under the town program. He also asked if other towns had approved Business Incentives for assisted living facilities. Christal replied that research into this area has not been done at this time. The group continued their discussion as to how the facility should be categorized and if the incentive should be updated. A final decision was not made at the conclusion of the discussion.

Properties – Dana Trado:

Steve Gogliettino informed the group that he met with the town's GIS specialist, Kevin. Wes asked why assistance was needed from the GIS specialist. Steve explained that Kevin has the ability to export data into a spreadsheet format for any given address. Steve recommended that the group identifying the most marketable properties and begin documenting details for them. The group discussed information provided by Scott that was from the developer's perspective. Steve mentioned putting the necessary information into marketing plan and that Kevin said he would be willing to help anytime. Matt recommended that the group first focus on listed properties and gave an example of old Blue Linx property. Wes asked the group if it would be beneficial to invest in updates to the existing EDC website. Christal added that the group needs numbers on the traffic to the website.

Deep Brook – Bob Rau:

Bob told the group that the State has not yet provided approval and that it is a lengthy process. Christal said George Benson has been handling communications for Deep Brook West on behalf of the EDC. Matt mentioned that signs advertising the property are falling down and are not visible. The group discussed whether the signs were still valid and if they should be repaired for removed. Christal asked



what the EDC wants to do regarding the signs. Matt recommended that there should be a sign on the property with appropriate contact phone number. Bob asked if there are restrictions requiring what can be done with the land and whether the land could be sold or only leased. Christal informed the group that they would have to look at the charter and go through the Legislative Council for approval if there was an offer. Bob will have Cramer follow-up.

Bob asked Christal if there have been any other interests in other areas of the Fairfield Hills campus besides Stratford Hall. Christal informed the group that although there is no other interest at this time she believes there will be interests when Woodbury Hall is removed. Bob credited Christal with her work on having the decaying building removed.

Chairman's Report:

Bob began by telling the group that Southbury has a vibrant effort in place to get movie companies to use properties in their town or to assist in finding properties in other towns if they do not have anything. Bob asked if Newtown could be added to a list to be considered. Christal informed the group that she has received requests but they have not been formal. Matt mentioned that Southbury has a film commission and members of this group have extensive experience in the film industry. This commission is very involved. Bob recommended that the EDC learn more about it.

Bob then discussed the proposed state budget impact on Newtown and the need for Newtown to have more economic development to assist the town.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by Wes at 8:48 pm and was seconded by Matt.

Respectfully Submitted, *Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*