



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES

March 19, 2019

Meeting Room 3 - 7:00pm

Present: Matthew Mihalcik, Nick Roussas, Steve Gogliettino, Cramer Owen, Al Roznicki, Barbara Snyder, Valerie Fallon, Jeffrey Robinson, Christal Preszler (Deputy Director of Economic and Community Development), Christine O'Neill (clerk)

Absent: Wes Thompson

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. There was no public participation.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Mihalcik made a motion to accept the minutes from February 19, 2019. Miss Fallon seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Welcome New Member:

Mr. Owen welcomed Mr. Robinson to the Commission. Mr. Robinson introduced himself and spoke of his experience in banking and commercial lending.

Chairman's and Vice Chairman's Reports:

6 Commerce Road: Also known as the "Deep Brook West" property. Mr. Owen explained that the EDC is trying to get a permit from the state to gain access/build a driveway. The Commission is waiting for a response from DEEP (DEEP recently petitioned for more information that had already been sent). If no progress is made, the next step may be to ask the State representatives for assistance with the approval process. The wetlands on the property pose an ongoing challenge.

Miscellaneous cross commission activities: Miss Snyder attended a SHOP meeting. Funds (\$2,000) had been appropriated from the Economic and Community Development office for SHOP in support of the proposal for the Heritage Trail for Sandy Hook. The project proposes highlighting several historically significant locations around Sandy Hook with signage.

In order to move forward with the 2019 grant from the Board of Realtors, they need to see that the grant they gave in 2018 has been executed. Mr. Thompson and Ms. Snyder requested from Michael Burton of SHOP to have a copy of the Heritage Trail presentation so they could show it to the grantors; also could take part of it to leverage for another grant.

Fairfield County Commercial Brokers Network: Newtown is hosting the next FCCBN meeting at the Alexandria Room in Edmond Town Hall on April 26th. 100-120 is the expected turnout.

Mr. Mihalcik and Mr. Gogliettino have been working on a multimedia presentation. Right now it is under review by Miss Preszler and Kim Chiappetta, who like the content but would prefer to add the cultural/community aspects of Newtown in addition to the business/economic highlights.

Miss Preszler is going to work on developing a handout with Newtown demographics (median income, etc.) and Miss Snyder will also have a printout with listings of available commercial properties.

Miss Snyder has two bids, one from Caraluzzi's and one from Sal e Pepe's, for food for the meeting. Three different vendors will provide desserts. Miss Preszler wants to showcase as many local businesses as possible, and Miss Fallon asked about having nameplates to identify where the food is coming from.

Ribbon-Cutting: Reverie Brewing Co. had a ribbon-cutting last month. Miss Preszler reports that the business is doing very well. They are part of a network of brew pubs (for craft beer/microbreweries) that Asylum, the brew pub coming to Fairfield Hills, may also join. Mr. Mihalcik mentioned that an article in the Newtown Bee talked about how Asylum has been inspired by Reverie's positive reception. Because Reverie does not have a kitchen, there are food truck, delivery, and bring-your-own-food options.

Deputy Director of Economic and Community Development Reports

"One Page Business Plan" is part of a seminar series put on by SCORE/the Chamber of Commerce that EDC is sponsoring and is taking place at the library tonight.

EDC Display Table is picking up traction, booked through August.

Good collaboration between businesses in Highland Plaza. Butcher's Best and BD Provisions have worked with local CSAs to include local meat and grains, respectively, with the businesses' offerings.

Helen Brickfield is no longer with the Chamber of Commerce. Martini Madness is coming up as a Chamber event.

Assisted Living on Church Hill Road is slated to open in August.

Maplewood is going to have a snack/cocktail party for the community in May.

Lexington has filled well, all COs are complete.

Connecticut Main Street is a nonprofit that works to revive main streets. Miss Preszler nominated Chis Hodus (who did restoration for Sabrina Style, etc. in Sandy Hook) for an award, which he will receive in June. EDC will sponsor a portion of the event during Newtown Restaurant Week.

Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates:

AARP Grant: The theme is “Livable Communities,” with an eye towards seniors as part of a larger community. The amount that you can ask for is vague, which makes it a little complicated. It is due April 17th. The Economic and Community Development staff is completing the application to get funding for signs for the Heritage Trail, but Miss Preszler expressed some concerns about permitting (State right-of-way) as a potential obstacle. The grant will need to focus only on select signs.

Exit 9: Mr. Owen explained that some significant activity is occurring near Exit 9. A proposal was put forth to the Inland Wetlands Commission for a large apartment complex, and it was denied. Also, 180 apartment units are under construction. Furthermore, there are two other applications for gas stations - one is farther along in the process (13 Hawleyville Road) and is more community oriented, with the building designed to look like the old train station. The other (26 Hawleyville Road) has only been through a ZBA approval and is more of a truck stop with diesel pumps. The Commission agreed that the larger gas station would not be a desirable addition to the community.

Residential Real Estate: Miss Snyder said that Mr. Thompson had asked her to prepare a report about residential real estate in Newtown. The trend is generally downward, but the market is picking up for spring. This downward trend is not specific to Newtown, but rather is representative of Bethel, Westport, etc.

Farmers Market: Starts in April, may be moving their location within Fairfield Hills campus.

“Newtown Day”: Among other events at Fairfield Hill campus this year is Newtown Day, featuring food trucks. June 27th. Working to bring in as many local vendors as possible. Very well attended in the past. Mr. Roussas asked if there would be alcohol served, and Mr. Owen responded that last year there was a beer and wine garden.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Mihalcik at 7:52 pm and was seconded by Mr. Roussas.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Christine O’Neill, Clerk*