



MINUTES

May 21, 2019

Reverie Brewing

57B Church Hill Rd

Present:

Wes Thompson, Nick Roussas, Cramer Owen, Jeffrey Robinson, Barbara Snyder, Valerie Fallon, Matthew Mihalcik, Christal Preszler – Deputy Director Economic and Community Development, Kim Chiappetta – Economic and Community Development & Fairfield Hills Coordinator (clerk)

Absent: Steve Gogliettino, Al Roznicki

Public Attendance:

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Public Participation:

None.

Approval of Minutes:

Matt Mihalcik made a motion to accept the minutes from April 16, 2019. Cramer Owen seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Chairman's and Vice Chairman's Reports:

6 Commerce Road:

Chairman Wes Thompson provided newer members a brief history of the town owned property, 6 Commerce Rd. Consultants that were hired by the town submitted necessary paperwork to the State to which the State had 30 days to respond. George Benson, Director of Planning, has been waiting for a response and is ready to take some action. Recently, the State has expressed concern with possible drainage to Deep Brook. The group discussed the periodic testing that is performed on water in that area. If the property is not approved for development the Town will escalate with the State. Wes told newer members that the EDC is the developer on record, so it is the Commission's responsibility to get this through.

Miscellaneous cross commission activities:

Wes asked if any members attended ***Rocking the Hook*** (2019 Sandy Hook Village free concert) which the EDC's Restaurant Week was one of the sponsors. Christal told members she heard an interview on a local radio station where Newtown-Sandy Hook Restaurant Week was noted as a sponsor, and as a



result noticed new likes on the Newtown-Sandy Hook Restaurant Week Facebook page. Wes reminded the group of the upcoming Pootatuck Duck Race and encouraged members to attend.

Wes then gave an update on senior related activities. Friends of Newtown Seniors (FONS) is working hard to align with the Senior Center and Commission on Aging. FONS sponsored the volunteer fair held at the library to help seniors find opportunities to volunteer. The AARP Livable Communities concept, which is multi-generational, is getting a lot of movement much of which is related to economic development. One senior is successfully teaming with the Town Clerk, Debbie Halstead and Technology and GIS Director, Al Miles, to have an app link created that seniors can have on their phones which will connect directly to senior related information on the town website.

Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates:

Recap - Fairfield County Commercial Brokers Network – 4/26:

Wes thanked everyone who worked on the coordination of the Fairfield County Commercial Brokers Network (FCCBN) luncheon. Despite the weather and the distance there was a good turnout. Wes noted to everyone that he was not aware that he would be called up to speak, and recommended to all Commission members that they have an EDC 60 second elevator pitch, and that Christal has one also. Christal told everyone that the Win Baum, head of the FCCBN, was pleased with the event.

Location - Reverie Brewing:

Christal Preszler introduced Ryan and Mark Broderick, owners of Reverie Brewing Co. Ryan thanked everyone for coming in. He began by telling everyone that 2 years ago he found himself sitting at a desk at J.P. Morgan trying to decide what to do with his life. With the thought that his father was a fan of craft beer and a restaurant owner for 15-years, Ryan began to consider opening his own brewery and drafted a business plan. A former college friend connected Ryan to Frank Lockwood, who is now the Head Brewer and co-owner of Reverie. He told everyone how Christal has been a huge help and an advocate for their business. Mark told the group that Ryan selected Newtown for the location of his business and then began looking for a space. Since there is not a lot of industrial space in Newtown, they made their current location work. Cramer asked what has been the biggest surprise for them.

Ryan replied that 99% of the people he has met have been genuinely happy that Reverie is in Newtown. Although there are many work hours, he's still happy to go to work the next day. Frank said both new customers and repeat customers are amazing. Regulars are the most fun part because you get to know them more personally. Barbara asked if there was anything they would like to see happen better in terms of exposure, or that would be beneficial to growing the business. The group then discussed the street sign. Ryan said his frustration is with the brewery industry being lumped in with restaurants in regards to State regulations. Christal told everyone that Reverie is embracing the community. Ryan explained that the core business model is to be as local as possible. He gave the example of selling BD Provisions snacks and using their coffee in one of their stouts. Reverie also gives left-over grains to local farms, and recently held a bar exercise class in coordination with Martina Sprague, owner of Balanced



Bar & Pilates Studio where 100% of proceeds went to Ability Beyond. Nick Roussas noted that Reverie Brewing has food trucks. Ryan explained that the town had no laws for food trucks, so prior to getting into the permit process the town included language to allow food trucks on the weekends. Matt asked if Friday through Sunday is enough time for food trucks. Ryan replied it is sufficient and during other days people get take-out from local restaurants. The group thanked Ryan and Mark for allowing the EDC to hold their meeting at Reverie.

New Business Updates/Ribbon Cuttings:

Ribbon Cuttings:

Christal told members that the Chamber continues to hold ribbon cuttings, but does not have any scheduled at this time. Wes encouraged everyone to attend ribbon cuttings. The group discussed signing up for Chamber News & Events emails to be notified of upcoming ribbon cuttings and other events.

New Business:

Christal informed everyone of a new restaurant in the former Alicante location in Plaza South, and that Spirit Halloween will be returning to Sand Hill Plaza.

FCCBN Luncheon:

Christal thanked everyone for their roles in the luncheon and recognized Economic and Community Development Coordinator, Kim Chiappetta, for her work on the video, hand-outs and assistance coordinating the event. Wes told the group that a portion of the video was shown at the last Legislative Council meeting.

Grants & Sponsorships:

Christal told the group that Kim is working on an Economic Development Administration grant proposal for money to upgrade infrastructure on the Fairfield Hills main campus. As a member of the Naugatuck Valley COG, the Town of Newtown is eligible to apply. If the proposal is approved we will move forward to the application process. Kim is also assisting Land Use with a LOT/CIP grant for the Main Street streetscape. As part of branding, Economic and Community Development is sponsoring the Newtown Historical Society's History Camp. Christal explained that a constant message from new businesses is that they like Newtown, so it is important to support things that make Newtown so likeable and unique.

Rebranding:

Christal is working with Purchasing on new branding to differentiate Economic and Community Development from the Economic Development Commission. Next year, we will be working on integrating and streamlining by combining websites and social media.



Member Comments and General Discussion:

Project Updates, Seminar Attendance, and General Discussion:

Borough:

Wes asked if any member had anything to report. Valerie told the group that she follows the Borough, and that many residents are up in arms regarding how the budget has been managed. A specific concern with many people is with the old Inn at Newtown property and what will become of it. The current owner of the property has been talking to developers who want to build apartments, which density is a concern on Main Street. There are also some traffic concerns. The thought is that the reserved budget could be used for defense costs if a proposed development went to court. Many know that per State and Federal laws there is not all of control of the situation. The last Borough budget was not passed, so another proposal needs to be presented. Wes explained that in the past the EDC has tried to encourage continuing use of the property as a restaurant but received feedback that the amount of work required would be too costly. The group discussed if the town should continue with the Borough as an entity. Wes recommended the possibility of creating a local enterprise zone as has been done by some other towns in an effort to get blighted properties renovated. The EDC could decide to try to take forward the concept of a local enterprise zone to get the property fixed, but there still needs to be a buyer. Christal informed the group that there are historical tax credits and there are developers that know about these benefits. The group further discussed the project and the possibility of the EDC getting involved.

Vacant Commercial Property Project:

Wes informed members of a project Jeffery is working on to identify vacant commercial spaces on South Main Street. This will be added to the next meeting's agenda as a major topic. Matt provided Jeffery a grand list that he used for the basis of his work. Everyone agreed that this is an important piece of work that should possibly be extended to other design districts. Cramer added that this would identify areas where there are issues and the EDC could come up with new ideas for alternative development.

Christal asked members to contact her with any suggestions for the next off-site meeting.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by Cramer at 8:14 pm and was seconded by Matt.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk