

Newtown Municipal Center  
3 Primrose Street  
Newtown, CT  
[www.newtown.org](http://www.newtown.org)



MINUTES

October 15, 2019

Meeting Room 3 - 7:00pm

**Present:**

Wes Thompson, Cramer Owen, Barbara Snyder, Valerie Fallon, Al Roznicki, Matthew Mihalcik, Steve Gogliettino (7:05), Jeffrey Robinson, Christal Preszler – Deputy Director Economic and Community Development, Kim Chiappetta – Economic and Community Development & Fairfield Hills Coordinator (clerk)

**Absent:** Nick Roussas

**Public Attendance:** None.

**Also in Attendance:**

Members of the Chamber of Commerce of Newtown: Scott Anders – President, Judith Miller – Vice President, Helen Brickfield – Business Development Manager

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

**Public Participation:** None.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Cramer Owen made a motion to accept the minutes from September 17, 25, 26 and October 10, 2019. Valerie Fallon seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

**Review and approval of 2020 meeting calendar:**

Matt Mihalcik made a motion to accept the 2020 EDC meeting calendar. Cramer seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

**Newtown Chamber of Commerce:**

Chairman Wes Thompson introduced the Chamber of Commerce of Newtown President Scott Anders, Business Development Manager Helen Brickfield, and Vice President Judith Miller. Mr. Anders began by telling Commission members that they are trying to improve the value of membership in the Chamber. The Chamber works to help and support businesses in town and would like to know how the Chamber can work better with the Economic Development Commission and the Town's Economic and Community



Development department. The group discussed setting up a more formal working process, recognizing overlap and how the skills of each group can help the other.

Wes noted the 3 groups in town, the Chamber, Sandy Hook Organization for Prosperity (S.H.O.P.) and Stony Hill 4 Corners and that he feels it would be more beneficial to have one main group with sub-groups. He envisioned different community groups covering sections of Newtown as part of the Chamber. The President of the Chamber and the Chairman of the EDC discussed the possibility of the groups working together on events. Newtown Day has been a successful event for both the Chamber and Parks and Rec, and Mr. Anders would like to hold an event in conjunction with the EDC such as a business of the year award ceremony. These awards would have many categories that would include larger companies and smaller businesses. EDC member Barbara Snyder asked if the Chamber could share their calendar so Commission members can brainstorm how the EDC may best fit in with one of the Chamber events. EDC member Jeffry Robinson asked Mr. Anders what he felt were the strengths and weaknesses of the Chamber. Mr. Anders told him that they are good at marketing and promoting. They have a team of experts that will talk with new businesses and who are proactive in terms of coaching. At this time they do not add value when it comes to larger organizations. Ms. Brickfield informed members that business education has been handed off to the library. Other upcoming chamber events include the Economic Forecast as well as other small business focused events. The group discussed bringing new speakers to town. Mr. Anders explained to everyone that he was also planning to meet with S.H.O.P. and Stony Hill 4 Corners. Ms. Brickfield told EDC members that the Chamber is planning on having open quarterly meetings where members, Economic and Community Development and the EDC can attend.

#### **Economic and Community Development - Staff Updates:**

Christal Preszler told Commission members that the Town was awarded an EDA grant for a little over \$914,980 that will be used to replace the sanitary sewer mains on the Fairfield Hills campus.

#### **Member Comments and Updates:**

##### ***General Discussion:***

Barbara told the group about the Arts and Economic Development seminar she attended in which two consultants from UMass talked about maintaining economic health and growth by combining arts with town projects. A highlighted was when the Director of Public Works in New Britain presented the town's Beehive Bridge project and related street scape projects that used art to revitalize the area. Christal added that a point was made that many towns are lacking in necessary infrastructure and sidewalks, but Newtown already has both which will help support growth.



Barbara then told members that on Saturday she attended a presentation by developers who want to build apartments on the former Inn at Newtown property. She said they provided clarification that these units will be high-end rentals and that they are looking to target empty nesters who are looking to downsize. The average daily traffic would only add 80 cars to an average daily traffic of 25,000 which seems small in comparison. The developers expressed wanting to make the project pleasing to the town and made it very clear that they will walk away if there is a legal battle. The group discussed the pros and cons of the project. The developers will be returning with updated renderings better showing the buildings height in comparison to the surrounding areas and the set-back which would be further back than the current building is now.

The discussion returned to using the arts to revitalize an area. Christal told everyone she has learned that instead of always holding events at a centralized location they should be held in various commercial districts to bring in people. She gave an example of one town that did scarecrow contest through a commercial area where people were directed by shops and restaurants while enjoying the art. Christal has spoken with the company that manages Sand Hill plaza about adding a gazebo or grass area to making the location more of a place to visit and then drawing people to the stores.

**Chairman's and Vice Chairman's Reports:**

**6 Commerce Rd Update and Next Steps:**

Cramer Owen told Commission members that the town has received the final documentation from the State of CT for 6 Commerce Rd, and that they now have everything necessary to list property. The next step is to get 3 bids for the appraisal of the property. Cramer will have an appraiser recommendation for the next EDC meeting. If the group supports the recommended business/person, the choice will then be presented to the Board of Selectman for approval. Christal reminded Cramer to ensure the town process is followed and to contact Rick Sprayer – Purchasing Agent. After the property is appraised the next step will be to select a realtor.

***Misc. cross commission activities:***

None

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned by Matt at 8:27 pm and was seconded by Cramer.

*Respectfully Submitted, Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk*