

May 27, 2021

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by Chairperson Stave. The meeting was hosted via Zoom internet conferencing.

Roll Call: Carolyn Gerrity, Sondra Astor Stave, Andrew Ladyga, Tim Liptrap, Bill Jobbagy, Barbara Barry

Absent: Sam Belsito, Richard Conti, Kristen Bilotta

Town Staff: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Eric Trott, Director of Planning and Development

Adoption of Minutes:

A motion was made by Gerrity and seconded by Jobbagy to adopt the April 22, 2021 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Planner/Manager Reports: Copies of the reports were forwarded to the members for their review and comment.

New Business:

1. Farmers' Market 2021 Season Planning:

Eric provided an update on the planning efforts for the 2021 season. The Committee continues to meet and prepare for the upcoming season, which is intended to be in the Market field. The vendor applications continue to be submitted. Efforts continue to address the standard pre-season to-do list. The new outdoor Covid guidelines are causing for a re-evaluation of the Market operations, in particular the requirement of masks due to the Health Department categorizing the Market as a large outdoor event. Staff and the Committee are working with the Health District on this. The Commissioner of Ag will be present on opening day. Seed planting and other activities are being planned as well.

2. Nichols College – Coventry business intern project:

Tim provided a status report. Some obstacles have occurred with having students work on the 4 town website design project. There has been very little interest in summer internships this year, which impacts the ability to support the local businesses at this time.

3. AdvanceCT – Regional Economic Development Study:

Monthly 4 Town Team meetings have continued since October 2020. The core Town Staff meet monthly before the full Steering Committee meetings that are also held monthly. The subcommittees meet regularly on assigned tasks. At the last meeting, the Steering Committee focused on reports from the subcommittees that were assigned specific projects/tasks. This includes: 4 town event calendar – policies and procedures are being developed for this effort; regional open space – trail marketing resource – the Team’s work will be integrated into the CT Trailfinder website statewide resource with the assistance of CRCOG – a separate map resource is also being pursued that will provide details on the 4 towns; regional destination theme-based mini-tours – various destination ‘trails’ are being developed, local currency – this is a concept that may be pursued at a later date, but is of interest to the Team; brand/slogan/logo campaign – the subcommittee met with a consultant and received a project quote which is being considered by the Team.

4. Target Development sites:

Members volunteered to serve as contacts with target development site owners and representatives in order to maintain contact with ongoing projects and the status of properties. The following is a review of the updates from the members and Staff:

1011 Main Street – Husky Pizza is now open. No new report.

1159 Main Street – The tea house proposal that had been discussed with Staff and the prospective tenant is not being pursued due to food service requirements. Staff understands that other interested parties have visited the site.

1193 Main Street – Sanborn’s Garage has a buyer who offers unique, custom Japanese vehicles, and is looking forward to performing some improvements to the site. They have received ZBA approval and are finalizing permitting at the local and State level.

1340 Main Street – former Coventry Antiques – The property is actively on the market. Staff understands that final steps with the environmental clean-up were scheduled to be completed last month. Staff contacted the owner for a status report.

3514 Main Street – Colvest – No update since Staff spoke with the owner last month.

3466 & 3480 Main Street – Vinton Village and apartments –Courtside Nutrition is now open. A new nail salon is performing interior improvements to locate on the upper level.

1660 Main Street – Blight enforcement is actively being pursued with the property since the owner has not addressed the building and site issues.

1570 Boston Turnpike – Staff spoke with a representative from Integrated Rehabilitation about a potential professional office use, which is permitted in that zone. Staff understands that an offer is to be made on the property, but not certain who is making it.

Eric reported on interest with the former Holistic Center site on RTE 6 for a motor vehicle storage site. Staff met with the prospective developer recently and discussed the various permit processes that will be involved in addition to the site constraints that will need to be addressed with the design.

6. RTE 44 Bolton/Coventry sewers – status:

John provided an update. The new legislation has been approved and can provide one path towards a solution. The other path that is being administered by DEEP, involving the post scoping notice, is in process at this time. Staff is following up on questions from DEEP staff.

7. Caprilands – status:

There is no update on this matter.

8. Hytone Farm – anaerobic digester project:

Staff worked with the Town Attorney, who did extensive research into the subject matter, to prepare a draft set of regulations to support the project. Hytone’s goal is to construct a barn addition, digester, associated storage of treated material, electrical production equipment, and supporting infrastructure. The Perocchios are in the process of finalizing their design plans, but wetlands delineation has not yet occurred, which is important in the permitting process. The draft regulations detail two distinct permitting paths to allow the project, depending on whether the digester relies upon off-site food waste. Hytone’s consultant believes that their proposal should not be one that is required to obtain a special permit, but rather be considered as an accessory use. The consultant is providing guidance and information to the Commission to assist in understanding the project better and how to draft appropriate regulations. The hearing on the amendment will be in July.

9. Coventry Village Partners – Spotlight on Main Street, business collaboration:

Staff continues to meet with the Partners on a biweekly basis to assist with projects and activities that are occurring in the Village. A low-key spring event that respects COVID protocols and help to encourage visitors in the Village occurred on April 17/18. An Arts and Garden Tour in eastern CT has been planned and will include the Timberman's residence as well as art by other local artists on June 12. Plans continue to be formulated with the Partners in preparation for the CT Main Street sponsored Spotlight on Main Street event in Coventry Village. Considerations include: new art installations of David Hayes sculptures, Coventry Arts Guild artwork on display in Mill Brook Place, a small reception with food and drinks, a short tour of the Village. Staff is meeting a representative of the CT Main Street Center in the Village next week to discuss the event in more detail

10. Business certificates distribution to new and expanded businesses:

Staff prepared a revised list of new and recently expanded/improved businesses, based upon the Commission's guidance at the last meeting. Certificates of recognition are being finalized which will be signed by the EDC Chair and John and will be distributed to the businesses by members of the Commission.

John suggested a new program that could be considered by the EDC that involves recognition of individuals in local businesses that demonstrate exceptional customer service skills. An example was provided about a Dunkin Donuts staff person. By recognizing the employee, the business also gets recognized as having noteworthy customer service.

11. UCONN autonomous vehicle project:

John indicated that the project will likely be moving forward in Mansfield.

12. CLCC – Boston Turnpike – State of CT DRS – Neighborhood Assistance Act Program:

Staff assisted CLCC with the preparation of the application to support the installation of HVAC systems in buildings on site. The Town Council approved the project after conducting a public hearing. The application has been submitted to the DRS and is currently being considered.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development