

June 24, 2021

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chairperson Stave. The meeting was hosted via Zoom internet conferencing and in conference room b.

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

Absent: Sam Belsito

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

Adoption of Minutes:

A motion was made by Barry and seconded by Gerrity to adopt the May 27, 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.

John distributed some information about the new laws for recreational cannabis. Business and local tax implications were briefly discussed. Massachusetts' relative experience was also discussed.

John mentioned some details about the new budget which was passed by the community earlier this spring, including the COVRRRA budget. Police department staffing was also discussed.

John discussed the American Rescue Plan funds that will be directed to the Town and how the funds are expected to be utilized. Community Projects funding that was received from the Federal Government was reviewed. These funds will be used for a Main Street sidewalk extension project.

Andrew discussed a recent development that was proposed in Canton involving an electric vehicle showroom, service establishment, convenience store, coffee and ice cream shop. Discussion occurred about how the town could attract a similar proposal. A discussion occurred about a similar project that is occurring in Sturbridge, MA

New Business:

1. Farmers' Market 2021 Season Planning:

Eric provided an update on the Market's first 3 weeks of the 2021 season. The season has begun well with good customer turnouts – approximately 3,000+ per week and good weather. This in

on par with previous seasons. Work continues to process guest vendor permits to create an additional mix of vendors/producers week to week. Efforts are underway to seek out more farmers' to expand the number beyond what is currently in place to maintain an effective product quantity and mix. Themes will begin this Sunday with the 'Self-care Sunday' event, will continue into the season, and include sampling at the barn.

2. Nichols College – Coventry business intern project:

No update at this time.

3. 4 Town Economic Vitality Plan:

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 is being 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 reviewed a project quote provided by a marketing consultant. The next Steering Committee meeting will be dedicated to a review of work and accomplishments over the past 8 months and a prioritization of tasks for the balance of the year.

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 – No update on interest in the available space.

1193 Main Street – The new owner of Sanborn's has begun bringing vehicles on site and is making improvements to the site as well.

1340 Main Street – former Coventry Antiques – The property is actively on the market. The final steps with the environmental clean-up were completed last month.

3514 Main Street – Colvest – No update.

3466 & 3480 Main Street – Vinton Village – Courtside Nutrition is now open and are doing well. JM Nail Salon is now open.

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 understands that an offer has been made on the property, but not certain who has made it.

Staff provided details on the new tenant at the former Reid' on Main Street. The tenant is looking to establish a restaurant, but has not pursued permits as of yet. There is an issue with the use of the upstairs office as a residence, but improvements need to occur to enable this legally.

Tim reported that the 7-11 site will be for sale in the near future.

Atlantis Fresh Market is the new owner of the Citgo in the Village and have plans to do façade improvements.

5. 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.

6. Caprilands – status:

Staff contacted Attorney Purtill, the fiduciary of the Estate of Adelma Simmons, and learned that he is still pursuing the monetary damages that are due from Dr. Cook. It was necessary to have an attorney appointed to manage Dr. Cook's estate. An attorney has recently been appointed for that. Atty. Purtill suggested that Staff contact the Assistant Attorney General's office to begin the discussion on possible paths to pursue with any remaining funds from the Estate that can be used to continue the legacy of Adelma and Caprilands.

7. Hytone Farm – anaerobic digester project:

Staff worked with the Town Attorney to prepare draft Zoning Regulations that would allow the project. A public hearing has been scheduled for July 12 for them to be considered for adoption. Staff will be offering some revisions to the text that will better enable the project envisioned for Hytone Farm. The IWA has ruled it to be an accessory use to agriculture and need not be formally permitted by the Agency.

8. 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. An Arts and Garden Tour event in eastern CT that included the Timberman's residence as well as art by other local artists on June 12/13 was attended by over 150 people. 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 met a representative of the CT Main Street Center in the Village to discuss the event in more detail.

9. 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 were finalized which were signed by the EDC Chair and John and have been distributed to the businesses by members of the Commission.

10. Integrated Rehabilitation – site search:

Staff continues to work with Integrated Rehabilitation to find an available site for them to construct a new stand-alone building for the professional office use. Staff have discussed several possible sites. Mapping and other site details will be collected and shared with the contact at IR to assist them in finding a new location in town.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development