

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

MEETING NOTES

July 20, 2022, 2PM – 3PM

Eric welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2:03 pm.

- **Marketing consultant services – consultant hired, kick off meeting held, first concepts shared** – Eric said DKA was hired as the marketing consultant for the 4 Town Regional Economic Vitality Plan. A kickoff meeting was held on June 7, and a separate meeting was held more recently with representatives from all four towns to discuss ideas for taglines, logos, and brands.
- **4 Town – Tolland County Chamber of Commerce partner – WordPress website tune-up forum in July** – Tim Liptrap said the Tolland County Chamber hired a website designer and is also focused on showing small businesses how to save money. Eric said most small businesses in the area said they wanted help with their websites and with promoting themselves on Facebook. Tim said the WordPress tune-up forums have been going on for 2 weeks, and 10 people have attended so far.
- **UCONN Masters of Public Administration intern – assistance with 4 Town initiatives – student hired – to start early September** – Eric said new intern Joshua Hull brings a lot of energy to the role. A meeting will be held with him the first or second week of August to discuss the tasks in the strategic action plan, and he is expected to begin in late August or early September. Patrice said the intent is for the branding to be completed as he is stepping into the role.
- **Expanding partnerships – collaborations – invitations for future discussions: State Office of Tourism, Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board** – Susan Henrique of the Connecticut Convention & Sports Bureau, which has a contract with the CT Office of Tourism, spoke about the recent efforts by Noelle Stevenson and others at the Office of Tourism to expand promotions to the domestic and international tourism markets. Eric mentioned the DECD grant program and noted that it shares a common mission and many of the same assets and resources with the Office of Tourism. Susan said the initiative was self-funded and that many of the improvements to the CTvisit website have focused on using visual monikers, including maps showing the locations of trails. She also noted the new hubs on the website highlighting different aspects of CT, including adventure, arts and culture, LGBTQ+ attractions, etc. The goal is to advertise a hipper, cooler CT that offers more than just rest and relaxation.
- **4 Town Talk - Other Town news that relates to 4 Town mission:**
 - Diane Nadeau said the Windham Chamber of Commerce is working on a visitor guide for the general area, and raised the idea of coordinating a brochure swap. She recommended that arts-focused, culinary, and historic attractions in the

general area partner to co-market events. She specifically mentioned Spooktober since people often travel and spend money for Halloween, and said attractions could host trick-or-treating events or themed educational programs, like museum exhibits about the history of funerals or witchcraft. Diane also mentioned that the former location of the Senior Center will now house the Eastern CT Veterans Community Center.

- Patrice said Bolton has received lots of applications for businesses, including from the Alltown Fresh convenience store/gas station chain, which features a covered outdoor kitchen. Brenda said she had seen a similar outdoor cooking demonstration and thinks it is a good way to generate local interest through online videos.
- Ryan noted that Director of Planning and Development Linda Painter had left Mansfield. He said \$370,000 of Mansfield's ARPA funding was set aside for local business relief/assistance for small and independent businesses. An ad hoc committee is reviewing the applications that were received, which, if they are all granted, would use about half of the \$370,000 allotted. The remaining balance will likely also go toward business support or other economic development efforts.
- Cynthia mentioned that an autonomous vehicle test track was proposed for the UConn Depot Campus and has been approved by the Board of Trustees. The project is in its early stages, but it is expected that it will help generate tax revenue and job opportunities.
- In response to questions from Diane, Ryan said the focus of the ARPA business relief program is for-profit businesses, but relief for nonprofits has also been considered separately. In addition to the allotted amount for business relief, \$350,000 was set aside for social service agencies and \$75,000 for arts relief. Diane noted that many arts/culture/historic attractions and museums are largely run by volunteers and were likely heavily impacted by COVID.
- David said Tolland has hired a new Town Manager and he is doing well getting acclimated to the community. The Tolland EDC is focused on reaching out to landlords and potential businesses. Brenda mentioned that a campground in Tolland is under new ownership.
- Eric said the Coventry Farmers Market was ranked among the top five in New England by the American Farmland Trust. Its popularity is increasing and it has been bringing in around 3,000 - 4,000 guests market day. Coventry is also hiring a co-marketing manager to assist in market operations. Eric said July is Coventry Lake Awareness Month, and efforts are being made to reduce cyanobacteria in the lake and address other environmental concerns. The Coventry Lake Advisory and Monitoring Committee and the Booth & Dimock Library are helping to raise

awareness about these issues. Eric also mentioned a newly acquired open space on South River Road is being prepared for public usage.

- Richard said the Arts on Main Festival will take place September 17 and will feature art, music, a food court, children's activities, and a writers' camp/poets' corner. Parking is available at the middle school and a shuttle will be provided to the David Hayes sculpture.

Next meeting date, time, agenda items – The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 24, 2020 at 2:00 PM.