

December 2, 2021

Economic Development Commission  
Meeting Minutes

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm by Chairperson Stave. The meeting was hosted via Zoom internet conferencing and in conference room b.

**Roll Call:** Sondra Astor Stave, Andrew Ladyga, Bill Jobbagy, Barbara Barry, Carolyn Gerrity, Tim Liptrap, Sam Belsito, Darby Pollansky

Absent: Rick Conti

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 Jobbagy to adopt the October 28, 2021 minutes with one correction: Dr. Eleleheit's last name does not start with an 'A'.

The motion passed unanimously.

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

John reported that the RTE 44/Swamp Road intersection project contract has been executed and some preparation work will be occurring over the winter which includes the demolition of the residence.

Other projects will be commencing towards the spring – South Street sidewalks, methane venting at landfill, transfer station, softball fields at Miller Richardson. A transportation improvement grant needs to be submitted by next month for Daly Road pedestrian improvements.

Federal funding has been removed for the sidewalk extension project on Main Street to Daly Road. Congressman Courtney is trying to work with the State to recover the funds.

Town Staff vacancies that are in the process of being filled as well as other staffing issues were also discussed.

Town business – employee recognition:

Pam, John's intern, produced materials for an employee recognition program for the Commission's review, which was distributed to the Commission. The idea was sparked by an employee at Dunkin' Donuts who goes above and beyond in her work. This is a great way to support the business community by providing notice about the good work the employees are doing. The Commission reviewed the draft and will provide comments to staff.

**New Business:**

1. Farmers' Market 2021 Season Planning:

The Farmers' Market season closed on October 25. Market Master, Erica Pagliuco, was invited to attend the January EDC meeting to provide a report on the season, work to be done over the winter, and expectations for 2022.

Discussions continue with CT Landmarks about the site lease to continue the Market at Hale Homestead. A meeting is scheduled for next week between Erica, Erica and John to review an outline of brainstorming ideas that were forwarded by the Executive Director. The ideas involve methods for Landmarks to better engage the customers that are attending the Market.

2. 4 Town Economic Vitality Plan:

This month's meeting was well attended and included new staff from the Cultural Coalition, the region's State designated cultural arts service provider. The discussion with the Steering Committee involved the following: possible funding from the member towns to support 4 Town Plan initiatives in 2022 that align with the implementation matrix; evaluation of the 'partner' meetings that have occurred over the past few months and the development of a revised implementation matrix that takes into account the partners and tasks that enable the best collaboration – which can serve as a roadmap for 2022; the ongoing work to create more visibility with the Plan in the communities – including webpage development on each town website, eblasts to the community, other ideas. The next two meetings will be dedicated to meeting with the Tolland County Chamber and Windham Chamber respectively.

John gave an update on the autonomous vehicle development that was originally considered at UCONN. That proposal did not proceed at that location. The new concept involves a former airport in East Windsor. John had suggested Pratt and Whitney due to existing infrastructure that would support the use, but it is believed that the property is being pursued for another use.

John gave an update on broadband projects in the region. Frontier will be offering fiber optic cable to sections of the town in the near future. Dish network will also be coming onto three telecommunications towers in town.

3. Target development sites – member, staff contacts:

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:

1159 Main Street – No update on interest in the available space.

1340 Main Street – former Coventry Antiques – The property is actively on the market. The final steps with the environmental clean-up were completed. No new activity.

3514 Main Street – Colvest – No update.

1660 Main Street – The blighted buildings have been demolished and the materials are being removed to bring the property into compliance.

1570 Boston Turnpike – Local dentist Dr. Jenkins is pursuing a professional dental office project.

1209 Main Street – Former Nailed It Salon closed during COVID and has been rented by an appraisal firm, but they have not occupied it yet.

1265 Main Street – a new barber shop is doing interior work to the space and will be occupying soon.

#### 4. RTE 44 Bolton/Coventry sewers – status:

John provided an update. WPCA is pursuing some preliminary design work for a future low-pressure system on RTE 44. This will provide guidance on the needs and cost of such a system. Infrastructure funds will be becoming available soon and having conceptual plans will be helpful.

The WPCA continues to examine upgrade options for the wastewater control treatment facility on Main Street. Mansfield has reached out to Coventry to consider a two-town treatment facility.

#### 5. Coventry Village Partners – Christmas in the Village:

The Christmas in the Village event is scheduled for Sunday, December 5. This is the same weekend as the regional Artists Open Studios event as well. The hope is each event will synergize well. Eric and Planning Tech, Alexa, worked with the Coventry Village Partners to update business mapping materials that will be distributed at the event. The weather looks good for the event.

Eric continues to meet regularly and work with the Partners. The next meeting is December 16 where goals will be set for 2022, which can include hosting outdoor events.

CT Main Street Staff contacted Eric about the status of preparation of new Main Street resources that were driven by September's Spotlight on Main Street event hosted in Coventry Village. These resources are in the process of being developed and will be shared for review and

comment. The goal of the resources are to share initiatives that have been successful in Coventry throughout the state, particularly small town downtowns.

6. Coventry Village Business Activity:

Eric reported that Pizza on Main closed recently and the unit is available for lease. EyeTrade was recognized by a reader's poll in The Chronicle as the best eye care business in the region. A new barber shop will be locating in the former downstairs space of Rusty Relic. Interior alterations are occurring at this time.

7. New potential medical – dental office – 1572 Boston Turnpike:

Local dentist, Dr. Jenkins, is pursuing a professional office use at 1572 Boston Turnpike, which was the former target for Windham Hospital. Dr. Jenkins has hired LADA, P.C., who had been hired by the Town previously to do a target economic development site analysis on Boston Turnpike. Prospective designs have been prepared and shared with Staff. It was determined that there is a need for a zoning regulation amendment to create some front yard setback flexibility. Staff worked with the designer and the PZC on to create draft language. The amendment can have a positive impact on this and other development projects. The PZC is supportive of the amendment and an application has been submitted to the PZC. The public hearing for the application is scheduled for December 13 with the PZC. Staff will continue to work with the applicant and designer to facilitate the project.

8. Meadowbrook Plaza – tenant status:

The owner continues to work with the tenants to examine ways to address space needs. Both Meadowbrook Wine and Spirits and Integrated Rehab are looking to expand. People's Bank has continued their lease to stay at the Plaza.

American Family Care, an urgent care center, has been in contact with John to consider locating in Meadowbrook Plaza where Swiss Cleaners was located. They are open to building a new project on a stand-alone site as well.

9. EDC meeting with Town Council:

The new Town Council that was recently elected may wish to have a formal meeting with the Town Council at an upcoming meeting to discuss current projects and goals for the future. A discussion on the impediments to development can be discussed as well – ie: infrastructure, market forces. A meeting in February can be a good target.

10. CT Water Company – 5 year Plan:

Eric and John met with CT Water Company Staff recently to discuss a variety of Town related projects and how they can fit into the CT Water Company's 5 year plan. Since significant Federal funding will be becoming available for infrastructure projects. It is prudent to insure good communication between the Town and CT Water Company so projects can be put into the queue for future funding and action. Projects include: Pilgrim Hills Subdivision road reconstruction, interconnecting the South Coventry system with the Upton Subdivision via South Street extension, as well as a connection via South Street to the Lakeview system.

11. Captain Hale Financial Services:

This new professional office is the former location of Dr. Keenan on Boston Turnpike. The owner of the property is a Coventry resident. Work has recently been completed to construct a new covered entrance.

12. Staff discussions with development consultant:

Eric and John continue to have discussions with development consultants, both financial and construction companies to foster consideration in Coventry for senior housing in particular. A meeting was held with the financial consultant who described the various funding mechanisms that are available. Discussions continue with the construction consultant, but some concerns were raised about the lack of population concentration in Coventry required for such a project.

Possible support with ARP funding for an economic development consultant to assist with EDC initiatives can be discussed with the Town Council.

13. 1% for the Arts – ARP funding for Cultural Arts:

Town Staff prepared an application and criteria to consider funding requests for use of the \$36,000.00 designated by the Town Council for support of cultural arts entities in the community. The application deadline is December 31, 2021. Community outreach has occurred, but Staff will be sending additional communications in December to help spread the word.

14. Hytone Farm – Anaerobic Digester Project:

Permit applications have been submitted to the Building and Land Use Offices for consideration of the project. Eric worked with the consultant recently to provide the necessary materials to the

lending institution that helped in facilitating the project funding. It is Staff's understanding that Hytone Farm will be breaking ground in the spring.

15. Affordable Housing Plan Development:

The Town received a \$15,000.00 grant from the State of CT Department of Housing to assist in the preparation of an affordable housing plan for Coventry. A Request for Proposals was prepared and released to hire a consultant to assist in the plan preparation. The deadline for the submittals is December 9. The PZC will discuss the matter at its December 13 meeting and consider the creation of a subcommittee to represent the Commission and work with Staff and the consultant on this important project. The Plan must be completed by June of 2022 to comply with CT General Statutes.

16. EDC Budget – FY 22/23:

The past several budgets included funds for economic vitality initiatives in the EDC budget. Staff is requesting the Commission consider a recommendation again for the upcoming budget.

A motion was made by Liptrap and seconded by Pollansky to request the Town Council include \$5,000 in the Economic Development Budget to support initiatives associated with the 4 Town Economic Vitality Plan as well as activities to support the Coventry Village Partners. The motion was passed unanimously.

Andrew inquired about affordable housing units and if a particular, number of units needs to be targeted with the Plan. The Commission and Staff discussed the Statutory requirements under 8-30g for the number of affordable housing units in town. The experience of urban areas being able to support affordable housing when compared to the rural experience and challenges was also discussed.

Andrew inquired about requirements for vehicle charging stations, sewer developer agreements.

17. 2022 EDC Calendar of Meetings:

The 2022 calendar of meeting dates were reviewed by the Commission: January 27, February 24, March 24, April 28, May 26, June 23, July 28, August 25, September 22, October 27, December 1.

A motion was made by Liptrap, seconded by Ladyga to adopt the schedule as presented. The motion was passed unanimously

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**Adjournment:**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott  
Director of Planning and Development