

**February 24, 2022**

**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 at town hall.

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

Citizens: John Sabol

Absent: Rick Conti, Tim Liptrap, Darby Pollansky

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 January 27, 2022 minutes.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Guest – Rachel McKenna**

Barbara introduced Rachel, who is the owner of the cut flower farm on Dunn Road. She and her husband bought the farm in 2017. She is a new farmer who focuses on specialty cut flowers and unique species. She also hosts wreath making workshops. She continues to work with NRCS and the Uconn Cooperative Extension. She is looking to add a greenhouse and farm stand to help support her farm share operation. Her needs at the moment include: more experience, working our logistics of the farm, potential farmers' market connections and a cooperative Mother Nature.

John suggested that she connect with the Parks and Recreation Department to offer wreath making classes with the community.

The Commission thanked her for attending and offers their support for her business endeavors.

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

**New Business:**

**1. 4 Town Regional Economic Vitality Team updates:**

Eric provided an update on 4 Town initiatives:

- : A RFP is being prepared to hire a consultant to develop a logo/brand for the 4 Town initiative as well as a marketing plan.
- : A project with UCONN will be launched in March that will provide a conduit between the University and local businesses to gain interns that can support projects and needs of the businesses. A series of webinars will begin and extend into the spring about this and other programs being offered such as Tech Park space offerings to local manufacturers.
- : Tim will be doing a workshop for the Chamber on Facebook to support local businesses. Dates in April are being considered and a host location in Tolland.
- : An application was submitted by the 4 Town team with the Uconn Masters of Public Administration program to hire an intern to assist in executing the various initiatives in the Plan.

**2. Target development sites – member, staff contacts:**

Eric gave an update on a couple of properties of interest and referenced the staff project memo that gives a comprehensive overview on the status of projects.

Carolyn mentioned that she spoke to the realtor who is advertising the Coventry Antiques property. She indicates that he did not appear to understand the needs of or the adaptive re-use potential. A brief discussion occurred on potential uses.

**3. RTE 44 Bolton/Coventry sewers - status:**

John provided an update. A meeting with the Windham WPCA was held to begin the dialogue on connection considerations with the Windham sewer system. Improvements to the existing plant will be necessary which raises the question about whether an inter-municipal project is prudent. ARPA funds are available to assist with this.

John will be meeting with the new Bolton First Selectperson to discuss the ongoing efforts with the Bolton sewer extension project.

**4. New potential medical – dental office – Boston Turnpike –status:**

Eric reported that the PZC approved a zoning text amendment to help facilitate the project design at the December 13 meeting. Staff continues to work with the applicant and designer to facilitate the project. A preliminary design meeting was held to help address questions and help guide the project. An IWA permit is currently pending.

**5. 1% for the Arts – ARP funding for cultural arts:**

A first round of review of the applications has occurred and follow up information has been requested. Six applications were recommended for funding and were forwarded to the Town Council for a final decision. The Council approved the applications and award letters will be send out in March.

**6. Dunkin Donuts – access – vehicle cueing improvements:**

A special permit application is pending with the PZC to construct a new vehicle cueing operation to improve traffic flow and eliminate impacts on Main Street. A preliminary discussion occurred with the PZC and the Commission is supportive of the concept. A public hearing will open on the matter at the February 28 meeting.

**7. PZC regulations development – cannabis establishments:**

The PZC requested the Town Council’s position on the creation of Zoning Regulations to allow cannabis establishments in Coventry. The Council voted in support of this. The Commission Chair and Town Staff are working on developing draft regulations and are examining other town regulations that have been adopted as a reference.

**8. Housing Affordability Plan development:**

A website dedicated to the project has been launched which contains a link to a community survey, images of related projects, background information, samples of work that the Town has done to support housing affordability, and other guidance information. The PZC Housing Affordability Subcommittee is finalizing the Housing Needs Assessment. A community workshop is scheduled for March 30 at 7pm.

**9. New/Improved businesses – certificates of appreciation – business visitation:**

A list is being prepared by Staff and will be shared at the next EDC meeting.

**10. Tolland County Chamber of Commerce – small business workshop:**

Eric and Tim are working with the Executive Director of the Chamber to do a small business education workshop that will focus on social media. This will be under the umbrella of the 4 Town Economic Development Vitality Plan. A date in April is being considered and the location of the event will likely be in Tolland.

**11. Business Employee Recognition Program:**

The campaign will be closing shortly. A list of candidates will be shared with the Commission and a finalist will be selected based upon community votes. A formal recognition will occur for the winner.

**12. Farmers' Market 2022 planning and Hale Homestead lease status:**

The Market Operating Committee and Town Staff are actively planning for the 2022 season, which will essentially mirror the success of the 2021 season.

The Town and CT Landmarks agreed to a simple one year extension of the Market lease at the Homestead. This will allow ample time to negotiate the lease and provide an opportunity for the consultant that CT Landmarks hired to prepare their report on how the Homestead, and other Landmarks sites, can be more successful.

**13. Arts on Main – planning underway:**

The Land Use and Parks and Recreation Departments are cooperatively working with the Coventry Arts Guild to plan for the Arts on Main Street fest. A date in September is being selected. A budget and event details are being formulated. More details will be able to be shared at the next EDC meeting.

Andrew Ladyga read his resignation notice into the record. He thanked the Commission for the opportunity to serve and appreciates all the work that the Commission does. He believes that he will be better able to pursue the development of his commercial site as a citizen as opposed to a Commission member. But, he will be attending meetings regularly, as he had done in the past, and looks forward to ongoing discussions that will benefit the Town. The members and Staff thanked him for his service and also look forward to the continued efforts to support the growth at the Bolton Gateway, where his property is located.

John suggested that an EDC subcommittee be formed to help guide the discussion and work associated with the development of Andrew's site. This can provide a helpful conduit of communication and allow for focused work to support this endeavor. Members will respond with their interest and meetings will be scheduled in the near future. Updates will be provided to the EDC each month.

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**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott  
Director of Planning and Development