

April 23, 2020

Economic Development Commission  
Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by Chairperson Stave.

The meeting was hosted via Zoom internet conferencing.

Roll Call: Rick Conti, Barbara Barry, Tim Liptrap, Sondra Astor Stave, Sam Belsito

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

Adoption of Minutes: A motion was made by Conti and seconded by Barry to adopt the January 23, 2020 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Conti and seconded by Barry to adopt the February 27, 2020 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Planner/Manager Reports: Copies of the reports were included in the Commission agenda packet.

John mentioned that the bid was opened for the Grammar School parking lot project. There were 11 bidders. The project should begin in June.

The microgrid project is moving forward.

Work will begin on projects at the high school and middle school very soon.

Cumberland Farms has been shut down due to Covid. All Cumberland Farms projects in New England has been shut down. Eversource is active at the site doing the connection. No timetable to resume work has been established.

The Swamp Road and RTE 44 intersection project is put on hold to 2021. DOT will likely be working on the conveyance of a property to allow for the connection between Northfield Drive and Swamp Road.

New Business:

1. Economic Development update memorandum.

A copy of the updated memorandum was provided to the Commission and shows the latest activities on a variety of projects. There were no questions on the report. Conti mentioned that the report was comprehensive.

2. AdvanceCT (formerly CERC) – Regional Economic Development Study – ongoing work.

Work continues with the consultant. A working draft has been submitted to the Towns and each town has reviewed it and prepared comments. Final comments are being collected and will be forwarded to the consultant for document revision. A public forum will be held via online video conferencing when the draft is complete. It could be available for the next EDC meeting in May.

3. Caprilands status – RFP, conditions assessment report.

The conditions assessment study has been completed and the grant that funded it has been closed out. Additional grant funds could be made available from the State Historic Preservation Office for next steps with an adaptive re-use. The RFP has been released and will close out on May 11. Litigation continues between the Estate and Mr. Cook, but is beginning to slow down, due to the reduction of legal options that are available.

4. Bolton – Coventry RTE 44 sewer extension – DEEP, OPM

Staff will be reaching out to DEEP and OPM to schedule a meeting with the Towns to begin discussions on how to address the sewer issue.

5. 1572/1600 Boston Turnpike – development proposals

Two separate developments are moving forward next door to one another across the street from CVS and Dunkin Donuts. A retail use is being proposed at 1600 Boston Turnpike. An application is pending with the Inland Wetlands Agency for the proposed project. A medical office is being proposed at 1572 Boston Turnpike and is a bit behind 1600 with design. Soil testing and wetlands delineation is occurring at 1572 and preliminary design is occurring. Staff has worked with DOT to gain their guidance on how curb cuts will be viewed which will help with the ultimate design.

6. Facebook workshop – preempted

The workshop was going well, but had to be preempted due to the pandemic. There is interest in having a new workshop, perhaps using the internet conferencing. The Google event that was planned for June will try to be rescheduled.

7. Coventry Village Partners – status

The Partners were meeting on a regular basis up until recently but had to stop due to the pandemic. The group was making great efforts in working together and were developing a Daffodil Days event in April, which had to be cancelled. The Arts on Main event will likely have to be cancelled due to the pandemic, but a virtual event may be able to be considered. The Guild will be contacted to see if they would be interested in this concept.

8. Coventry business support during pandemic – EDC initiatives?

A lengthy discussion occurred about how the EDC can be of assistance to the business community. Timing is critical for this to occur and time is of the essence to work with our businesses.

A business listing – community map was shared with the Commission to provide a contact list for outreach and connection. Individual contact with businesses by Commission members to see what they need. Responses can be conveyed to Staff for follow up or connection with our Senator or Congressman for additional assistance.

Town Staff has been working with the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce and the Coventry Village Partners to share information and a serve as a conduit of resources to assist businesses. These efforts will continue.

The idea of a Town Hall meeting to host businesses and share information with them was discussed in detail. The Town has a Zoom license that can host up to 100 guests. A meeting has been scheduled for next Monday to further discuss this issue.

Everbridge and eblasts are two other methods to connect with the community and share news.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott  
Director of Planning and Development