

May 28, 2020

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:10pm by Chairperson Stave.

The meeting was hosted via Zoom internet conferencing.

Roll Call: Rick Conti, Barbara Barry, Tim Liptrap, Sondra Astor Stave, Sam Belsito, Kristen Bilotta, Carolyn Gerrity

Citizen: Andrew Ladyga

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 April 23 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

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

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

New Business:

1. Nichols College – Coventry business intern project - 13 students will be involved in the project with 7 businesses. Video interviews were conducted with the business owners. Students viewed and gave feedback on the videos and picked out a business to work with. They reached out to the businesses today. A variety of tasks are to be pursued, unique to the business. A SWOT analysis is the first step. A final report will be prepared by August. The class is being treated as if it is a social media agency. The students will be reporting also to the town and edc members. Members will be meeting with students to get guidance and feedback through the process. The value of the services is likely around \$8000. An additional aspect of the project is to tell the story of each business to make deeper connections.

2.Coventry open business website – This will also be part of the project as the students go further into the project. A draft is in hand. The Coventry Citizens Collective is serving as a helpful link to social media with a list.

3.Coventry business reopening – Town staff in the land use and building offices continue to work with the local restaurants in particular to assist them with their needs to reopen with outdoor dining options. Also, Town Staff continues to share information resources relative to programs, grants, regulations and other important details to assist the businesses.

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4.Coventry Farmers' Market reopening – Work continues to prepare for the Market opening on June 7. The Market operations will be very different since the in-field approach with the vendors and all of the standard elements will not occur this year, due to the pandemic. A 'tent-side pick-up' and on-line sales approach will occur this year. If restrictions are relaxed and the situation improves, then an in-field option could be considered later in the summer.

5.Google small business event – tentative June forum – Staff is working with the speaker from Google who came to last year's successful event. The goal is to have another small business support event for the 4 towns subject to the Regional Economic Vitality Action Plan and the 2 chambers of commerce.

6,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.

An update was provided on a couple projects:

: 2050 Boston Turnpike – An 'amusement center – festival use' that is seasonal – such as a Haunted Hayride and Santa's Village is being considered. The prospective leaseholder is compiling information to share with Town Staff to begin the process of review.

: John had a communication with DEEP about the RTE 44 sewer extension. DEEP and OPM have been in disagreement with the situation and asked the Town to wait for them to work out the situation. A meeting with State Representatives was held to help address this. Details to come on this soon.

: Town Hall employees will be returning to work full time schedules. It will be open to the public later in the month of June. All the proper protocols will be put into place prior to this.

: The land use and building office activity has been very busy with many projects in motion. Permitting is very strong as well as development applications.

: Bill Hall who was interested with the Knights of Columbus building received a special permit for an indoor/outdoor archery range. He may not pursue the property at this time. Staff will reach out Mr. Hall on the status.

: CLCC is working with the Town on a Neighborhood Assistance Act application with the Dept. of Revenue Services to gain grant funding to create a farm stand and greenhouse on their Boston Turnpike location.

7. AdvanceCT (formerly CERC) – Regional Economic Vitality Study – ongoing work.

Work continues with the consultant. Final comments have been collected from all the town staff and has been forwarded to the consultant for document revision. A public forum is anticipated to be held via online video conferencing when the draft is complete.

8. Caprilands status – RFP, next steps

The RFP closed on May 11 and only one response had been submitted. Town staff, fiduciary and the State's Attorney's office met and agreed not to accept the submittal since it did not meet the many of the RFP criteria. The Estate will be pursuing the outright sale of the property on the open real estate market. The Town will continue to assist with this situation to help find the most appropriate end user. Litigation continues between the Estate and Mr. Cook, but is beginning to slow down, due to the reduction of legal options that are available.

9. 1572/1600 Boston Turnpike – development proposals

Two separate developments continue to move 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 was approved by 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 has occurred at 1572 and preliminary design is occurring. The developer is working with the designer to complete the feasibility analysis and take the next steps.

Members asked questions about Town operations opening up in the coming weeks. Details were provided on Town beaches, Schools and other services.

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Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development