

July 23, 2020

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm by Vice Chair Jobbagy.

The meeting was hosted via Zoom internet conferencing.

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

Absent: Mark Lavitt

Citizen: Andrew Ladyga

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

New Business:

1. Nichols College – Coventry business intern project -

Students from the College were present for the meeting.

Tim gave a report on the status of the project.

Song a Day Music – Taylor and Olivia – website development and tab production, Students are modernizing the existing one.

Daniel Rust House – Taylor and Olivia – email marketing campaign with Mailchimp, to share info with clients. Business has been hit hard by COVID. Facebook posting improvements have been implemented.

Coventry Arts and Antiques – Dimitria – an update of the website has been occurring. Facebook engagement is another focus.

Meadowbrook Wine and Liquors – Dimitria – an update of the website has been the focus. An app is also being created.

EyeTrade - Catherine – Focusing on social media outlet improvements. A billboard is also being pursued.

Lions Club – Catherine – Working on the website and including historical projects and success stories. A goal is to engage the community and build membership.

Image Works – Brooke and Jarrod – website and social media platform development has been occurring.

Ackert Electric – Brooke and Jarrod – Facebook page development is occurring. A new website is being developed as well.

Three more weeks are left with the project. Over 1000 hours have been dedicated.

Performance measurements will be applied here, but the value will be long term. Follow up survey in future would be helpful to understand the successes and how they are defined.

2.Coventry Farmers’ Market

There has been significant pressure from the vendors and customers to return to the field for more of standard market. The Market Committee prior to the start of the season and again this week, confirmed that an in-field option will not be pursued due to risks associated with the pandemic, and the inability to facilitate the operations required with the small number of volunteers that we have, many of which are at an at-risk age. A meeting is being held on Sunday between the Committee, vendors and Staff to discuss ways of improving the visibility, marketing and sales.

2.Cumberland Farms – the project opened today and a lot of positive feedback has been gained on the attractiveness of the interior.

3.Retail project at 1600 Boston Turnpike – moving forward with PZC now. CT DOT concerns need to be addressed, but the project is nearing a decision.

4.Medical office development at 1572 Boston Turnpike –The project has hit some snags between the developer and the hospital. The future of Dr. Keenan and a medical presence may be lost.

5.Target Development Sites – Assignments connecting members and property owners and projects can help shepherd movement and create stronger relationships. A list will be compiled and members can make choices of who they would like to work with.

6.Google small business event - The webinar event was held on July 13 from 10 am to 11am. The subject was how to use YouTube to help grow your business. The three other towns involved in the Regional Economic Vitality Action Plan have been included to invite their businesses as well as the Tolland and Windham Chambers. About 25 people attended and the feedback was very positive about the event.

7.RTE 44 Bolton/Coventry sewers – A State agency meeting happened that ended in a conflict between offices regarding application of the laws. The offices worked out a path and solution for the town to pursue. Additional details and info will be shared with the State offices and the project will be further considered.

8.AdvanceCT (formerly CERC) – Regional Economic Vitality Study – ongoing work - The consultant has completed the revised draft of the Study and it has been forwarded to the Commission. All four towns will be sharing it with the respective communities, various stakeholders, boards/commissions, and staff involved in economic development. Comments on the Plan are requested to be submitted by August 21. A public forum has been scheduled for September 16 via Zoom.

7.Caprilands status – next steps

The Estate is pursuing the outright sale of the property on the open real estate market. A real estate professional has been selected by the Estate and the contract is being finalized. There is continued interest with the property, but the cost of remedial activities makes it prohibitive. The individual who responded to the RFP, remains interested in the property and has been communicating with the Estate. 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.

8.Recovery – Staff has been actively working on participating in forums and webinars about new tools available at the State level and with AdvanceCT.

9.Christmas in the Village – Plans are underway to host a small event that reflects appropriate protocols in the Village this year.

10.Winter Farmers' Market – Is looking to move the Market to Mill Brook Place. There is a great excitement in due to the connections that can be made with the Village businesses.

Adoption of Minutes: A motion was made by Barry and seconded by Liptrap to adopt the June 25, 2020 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Tim reported that there is a great of news being reported about colleges and higher education institutions closing due to COVID and the reduced enrollment which is causing financial distress. Debt is a major consideration with the closures. 30% of the nation's colleges are potentially going to close.

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

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Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development