

August 20, 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: Barbara Barry, Tim Liptrap, Sondra Astor Stave, Sam Belsito, Kristen Bilotta, Carolyn Gerrity, Bill Jobbagy

Absent: Mark Lavitt, Rick Conti

Town Staff: Eric Trott, Director of Planning and Development Nichols College

Tim gave a report on the status of the project. Students have completed their portion of the project. Good results and feedback overall. Four of the students will continue to work with the businesses over the fall to wrap up all the work. Great relationships were built. Over 1000 hours have been dedicated.

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. Owner is very excited about all work that was done.

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

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

EyeTrade - Catherine – Focusing on social media outlet improvements. The owner needed to stop being involved to focus more on her business.

Lions Club – Catherine – Working on the website and including historical projects and success stories. A goal is to engage the community and build membership. Looking good so far. Oral history has been a focus with photos.

Image Works – Brooke and Jarrod – website and social media platform development has been occurring. Owner very happy and engaged with project.

Ackert Electric – Brooke and Jarrod – Facebook page development is occurring. A new website is being developed as well. Work slowly moving forward. The owner is very busy.

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. Tim will be providing a final report in the coming weeks.

2. AdvanceCT – Regional Economic Development Study

The Commission engaged in a detailed discussion on the Plan and offered several thoughts on it:

- : Business start-up support – streamlining, guidance – similar to efforts at the State level
- : Support for the Farmers’ Market and agri-tourism, which serves as a small business ‘incubator’
- : Communication and collaboration between businesses is important – learn and share the successes
- : Defining measurements of success will be important to demonstrate successes
- : Need to address the fear that businesses have at this time – create confidence, support
- : Do a livestream video for the September 16 forum to share the Plan
- : Need to find ways to broadcast the value of individual town and mutual economic development success to counter the anti-development mentality – a reflection of the community survey that was done as part of the POCD update provides the reality of the overall community opinion on development
- : Focus on the quality of life benefits that exist in the region that can give it a positive identity

These comments will be shared with the other towns and the consultant.

3. Coventry Farmers’ Market

A meeting was held a few weeks ago between the Committee, vendors and Staff to discuss ways of improving the visibility, marketing and sales. It was agreed to create opportunities for vendors to offer impromptu sales in the field. This has also led to offering open opportunities for customers to visit the Market at a given time slot to do impromptu shopping. Some vendors have taken advantage of this and it has been beneficial.

4. Target Development Sites

The Commission reviewed a list of 9 potential businesses to connect with. Several other properties were added. Members volunteered to work with specific property owners or agents of the owners. Eric will provide a follow up list with contact information and an indication of who selected what businesses. The members will reach out by phone or email to their target business and provide monthly updates at the EDC meetings.

5.RTE 44 Bolton/Coventry sewers – status

Town Staff is pulling together information and correspondence to respond to the DEEP to address their outstanding questions. This will be submitted likely next month.

6.Caprilands – status

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 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.

7.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. But, Staff continues to connect with the Hospital Staff to find ways for them to maintain a medical presence in town. A financial advisor is still in the process of considering the former location of Dr. Keenan on Boston Turnpike.

8.Retail project at 1600 Boston Turnpike – The Dollar General project was approved by the PZC and will begin construction likely in September and be completed by year's end.

9.Winter Farmers' Market – They are 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. Staff attended a meeting with the Winter Market volunteers to discuss steps that will need to be taken to facilitate this.

An update was provided about the Senior Housing Alternatives Study Committee and their work to develop a plan to encourage senior housing in town.

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

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development