

September 24, 2020

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chairperson Stave. The meeting was hosted via Zoom internet conferencing.

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

Absent: Kristen Bilotta, Carolyn Gerrity

Also attending: Andrew Ladyga, Jeff and Carrie

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

Staff reported that Mark Lavitt has resigned from the EDC.

Jeff and Carrie from Nathan Hale Farm Stand on RTE 44 were welcomed as guests with the Commission. Jeremy Tomaszewsky has partnered with the owners. Barbara invited them to the meeting so they could share details on their new business.

Lizzie's Catering food truck is now locating on the property at 2054 Boston Turnpike. They are looking to meet the needs of the Town. They are offering pumpkins, mums, corn, and vegetables. Delivery and display of products at the property being delivered is an option they are pursuing. Grain and feed can be offered as well. Christmas trees – set ups and installs. Landscape services will also be offered.

1. Nichols College – Coventry business intern project.

Tim provided an update on the project.

Coventry Arts and Antiques new website is up and running.

Song a Day Music website is about to go live. Some image clean-up for the website is happening.

Meadowbrook Wine and Spirits website will be live this evening.

The students are working on the backend to assist with the search engine optimization.

For next year, Nichols College will be offering the students a class on website design. Our businesses will be able to take advantage of this opportunity.

One dilemma that has arisen is the time factor for the businesses to be available to be involved with the project.

Image Works is still in process. His work has been very busy.

Ackert Electric is still in process. His work has also been very busy.

The Daniel Rust House is live and are doing an email marketing campaign.

EyeTrade was not able to continue to participate in the project.

Lion's Club website is up but needs some minor work.

2. AdvanceCT – Regional Economic Development Study.

The study has been completed. Last week, a public presentation was held with the 4 towns and various stakeholders to review the findings and recommendations. Unfortunately, the presentation had to be cut short due to the meeting being accessed by individuals who were acting inappropriately. The meeting was nearing its conclusion. Town Staff from each Town did a separate Zoom video with closing remarks and comments which was annexed to the presentation. The video will be put on each town's websites, along with the final document.

3. Coventry Farmers' Market

The Market continues to operate with the 'tent side pickup' and with added impromptu purchases. It was also expanded for customers who have not made an online purchase to shop at the Market as long as they obtain a time slot to shop, in order to avoid traffic impacts. Five weeks remain with the Market this season.

4. Target Development Sites

At the last meeting, several members volunteered to serve as contacts with target development site owners and representatives in order to maintain contact with ongoing projects and the status of properties. Staff prepared an outline with contact information and an indication of who selected what businesses. The members were asked to reach out by phone or email to their target business and provide monthly updates at the EDC meetings.

1159 Main Street – former National Ribbon location – owner offering space for rent – Kristen

No update was provided since Kristen was not at the meeting.

1193 Main Street - Sanborn's Garage – for sale – no news on interest in property – Eric

Staff has been communicating with the realtor for the sale. It was offered for sale to the Town. However, the Town Council did not wish to pursue the property at this time. Staff researched funding options for cleanup of any contamination that exists on site and forwarded it to the realtor who appreciated the assistance.

1340 Main Street – former Coventry Antiques – property on market, status of professional office interest? – Carolyn

Carolyn let Staff know that she reached out to the contact who did not have any new information to share on the status of the property.

3514 Main Street – Colvest - new news on interest in property – Sondra – Sondra has sent two emails but no response has been received.

3466 & 3480 Main Street – Vinton Village and apartments – no news on prospective tenants; owner still pursuing apartment project? - Barbara – Barbara has spoken to the realtor and indicated that there has been some recent interest from new tenants. One question is what is the status of Can Dance Studio?

1660 Main Street – PNG (owner of Citgo gas station) – commercial zone – senior or affordable housing? – Kristen

No update was provided since Kristen was not at the meeting.

John mentioned the work that Staff has been doing to prepare some conceptual and prospective development site plans for growth in the Village. Citgo has been interested in relocating and expanding. Tom Welles is looking to sell some of his property which opens opportunities for adaptive re-use. The barn at the curve in the Village that resulted from the RTE 31 Curve Project will be conveyed to the Town at no cost. This offers an opportunity as well. It will need water, sewer, and power. Due to the slope/access of the site, it would likely not be appropriate for a business space. The Glass Museum is another opportunity site for adaptive re-use with the Town's ownership. The site has river frontage, a large barn in good condition. Art space for Hayes sculpture or other arts related programming could be a possibility.

John contacted a developer that we have had a relationship with and inquired about if an Aldi's would be interested in looking at Coventry. They are not looking at this area for more new locations. But, they will revisit in a couple years.

The Hayes Homestead was the subject of a CPTV program which will be aired in the near future.

GH Robertson School has been recognized as a 'Blue Ribbon School' which is a very noteworthy distinction.

Tim asked if the noteworthy videos and TV productions could be placed on the Town website to highlight the work that was done over time. Staff will pursue this idea.

5.RTE 44 Bolton/Coventry sewers – status

Staff is pulling together information and correspondence to respond to the DEEP and address their outstanding questions. Jacobson Engineering is working with the Town and their work is still in process. This will be submitted likely in October.

6.Caprilands – status

The Estate is pursuing the outright sale of the property on the open real estate market. It is Staff's understanding that an offer has been made for the property and a contract has been submitted. It is the intention of the prospective owner to establish a small farm on the premises. It will likely be necessary to remove the historic home, but the accessory buildings would likely remain.

Staff had a conversation with Atty. Gano, from the State Attorney General's Office about the possibility of using any funds remaining after all the bills from the Estate are paid for continuing the Caprilands legacy. Ideas such as educational programs, greenhouses, copies of Adelma's literature at the Booth & Dimock Library, video presentations were discussed as possibilities. Staff will prepare a narrative about this and submit it to Atty. Gano. The Town will continue to assist with this situation to help the new owner and find ways to support the Caprilands legacy. 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.CVS – HealthHub.

Staff reported that CVS had made a substantial investment at their Coventry location. HealthHub is a new and expanded medical service operation that compliments the MinuteClinic service. The Coventry location has had renovations to support this service.

8.Vinton Village apartment project.

Staff is working with the owner of the property to facilitate a new apartment project. The owner has received a conceptual approval from the DEEP for the septic design, which is a very

important step due to the constraints on the site. The designer is continuing work on the site plan in order to submit plans for consideration with the Town PZC.

9. Creative Living Community of CT – Neighborhood Assistance Act Grant – revised project scope.

Staff assisted CLCC in submitting a Department of Revenue Services Neighborhood Assistance Act Grant to facilitate a new vocational greenhouse at their RTE 44 location. The project was approved by DRS. CLCC needs to find a sponsor entity to enable the tax credits to be applied to the project. The deadline is October 1 to accomplish this.

CLCC has recently partnered with the Corporation for Independent Living, who worked with the Town to create the Kenyon Falls condominium project. This partnership is a great match due to the scope of each entity. CLCC is now considering a revised project scope and design for their residential/agriculture project on RTE 44 that will better align with their mission. This will require a new special permit from the PZC due to the significance of the changes.

10. CT DECD business survey to measure COVID impacts.

Staff sent the notice regarding the survey to an email list of town businesses as well as the Coventry Village Partners email list to encourage businesses to respond.

11. Long Term Recovery Regional Committee.

Planning Staff has been appointed to the Committee to represent Coventry's interest in this effort. A meeting was held today to review the work that is to be accomplished by a consultant that the State has hired to assist in developing a concerted plan to address the recovery needs of the region due to the pandemic. The timeframe is very short to accomplish this effort. The plan is anticipated by year's end.

Staff mentioned the work that is being done on the Nathan Hale Greenway to get some forest management activities and start the 'well-worn path'.

Adoption of Minutes:

A motion was made by Barry and seconded by Conti to adopt the August 20, 2020 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

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Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development