

October 20, 2020

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm by Chairperson Stave. The meeting was hosted via Zoom internet conferencing.

Roll Call: Barbara Barry, Tim Liptrap, Sondra Astor Stave, Bill Jobbagy, Carolyn Gerrity

Absent: Kristen Bilotta, Sam Belsito, Rick Conti

Also attending: Andrew Ladyga, Lori Klar

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

1. Nichols College – Coventry business intern project.

Tim provided an update on the project.

A paid staff person from Nichols who works in the tv broadcasting studio has been hired to work 10 hours a week with Tim and the students. Video work can be offered to either the businesses involved in the program or other opportunities.

Tim has been hired by Nichols College to create a Digital Economy Degree to support entrepreneurial activity and small businesses. Students will be instructed in website design and then interns can work directly with businesses.

Tim talked with the businesses involved with the program and they indicated that they missed working with the students and really enjoyed the opportunity. Tim felt that there should be discussions on how to bring businesses together and increase motivation with the businesses. The group ‘HYPER’, a young professionals group in the Hartford Metro area, could be a model.

The Lion’s Club is looking at ways of doing the Christmas in the Village Christmas Tree sales and contest in a virtual fashion. A vote would occur on the trees and perhaps outside decorations.

2. AdvanceCT – Regional Economic Development Study.

The 4 Town team had a kick off meeting with a variety of stakeholders from each town which was very successful. A variety of folks attended including EDC members, business owners, staff, and conservation commission members. Discussions on what aspects of the Plan resonates with each person who attended and what the priorities are. The MOU is being finalized. Monthly meetings are expected to be held with the steering committee.

3.Coventry Farmers' Market

The Market continues to operate with the 'tent side pickup' and with added impromptu purchases. The final weekend will be this coming Sunday. Staff will be meeting with the new Executive Director of CT Landmarks in the coming weeks. The lease of the property for the Market will be a subject of discussion moving forward.

4.Target Development Sites

Two meetings ago, 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. The following is a review of the updates:

Eric and John had a meeting with Ron Nadeau to discuss his plans with his properties and to see how the Town can assist. The meeting went well.

John provided updates on some additional projects:

- : Project Clay is still moving forward and the Town is still being considered.
- : Integrated Rehab is in need of more space and is looking for new locations in town if available.
- : Rusty Relic has reportedly bought another property in Woodstock and will be moving out of their Coventry location.
- : Staff has been in contact with the owners of the Holistic Center property to discuss the status of Project Clay.
- : Dollar General is on hold until the State of CT Drinking Water Division issues a permit.
- : There is interest with the David Hayes family to move a new sculpture to the barn site at the curve in the Village. Staff is working on getting the barn conveyance and with the Hayes family to make arrangements for the new sculpture.
- : Plans are being discussed preliminarily about the Town pursuing of retuning the Glass Museum barn to Town ownership. This could open doors for river access, adaptive re-use for the barn with programming or other uses.
- : The 'Legacy Lost' PBS program was at the Hayes Homestead to film an episode.
- : The Winter Farmers' Market will be located at the Community Center instead of pursuing the Mill Brook Place.

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1159 Main Street – former National Ribbon location – the space is being rented for storage. Coventry Fitness is closing and the equipment. Barbara indicated that she heard that the National Ribbon space is being used for storage by UCONN students.

1193 Main Street - Sanborn's Garage – for sale. No update.

1340 Main Street – former Coventry Antiques – property on market, status of professional office interest? No update.

3514 Main Street – Colvest - new news on interest in property – Eric contacted one of the reps at Colvest, but little is being done to market the site. They are aware of interest by Integrated Rehab but have not followed up.

3466 & 3480 Main Street – Vinton Village and apartments – no news on prospective tenants; owner still pursuing apartment project? No update.

1660 Main Street – PNG (owner of Citgo gas station) – commercial zone – senior or affordable housing? No update.

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 report is still in process. This will be submitted likely in November.

6.Caprilands – status

The Estate is pursuing the outright sale of the property on the open real estate market. The Probate Court approved the sale.

Staff followed up on the 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. A formal memo was prepared outlining legacy continuing ideas such as educational programs, greenhouses, copies of Adelma's literature at the Booth & Dimock Library, video presentations were discussed as possibilities. 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.

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7. CLCC – Farm Stand Day

CLCC kicked off the use of their new farm stand with an event on site. They also reported that they will be receiving \$5000 from the Neighborhood Assistance Act funding from the State of CT DRS.

8. SustainableCT preparation.

Staff met preliminarily to review the tasks that will be necessary to consider submitting an application in 2021.

9. Medical practices in Town.

Staff discussed concerns with the status of medical services in town. Dr. Keenan is retiring and HHC is not replacing him. Dr. Edelheit is moving his office to Tolland. The EDC discussed what could be done to encourage a solution to the situation of no doctors serving the town.

A motion was made by Barbara and seconded by Liptrap to prepare a letter that will be forwarded to the Town Council urging the Town to encourage a physician be located in Town by working with the regional health care provider companies.

The motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of Minutes:

A motion was made by Liptrap and seconded by Barry to adopt the September 24, 2020 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development