

February 25, 2021

Economic Development Commission  
Meeting Minutes

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm by Chairperson Stave. The meeting was hosted via Zoom internet conferencing.

**Roll Call:** Barbara Barry, Tim Liptrap, Carolyn Gerrity, Kristen Bilotta, Sondra Astor Stave, Andrew Ladyga (arrived at 7:10pm)

**Absent:** Sam Belsito

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

**Adoption of Minutes:**

A motion was made by Garrity and seconded by Liptrap to adopt the January 28, 2021 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**Planner/Manager Reports:** Copies of the reports were forwarded to the members for their review and comment.

**New Business:**

1. Farmers' Market 2021 Season Planning:

Eric provided an update on the planning efforts for the 2021 season. The Committee continues to meet prepare for the upcoming season, which is intended to be in the Market field. The vendor layout and overall logistics of the Market is being discussed with the Health District. The vendor guidelines and application have been amended to include a section where the vendor will need to provide details on how they are contributing to the Market operation, beyond simply showing up, such as volunteering, or assisting with the operation of the Market. This will also include the defined need to participate in social media and marketing. Vendor fees will also need to be increased to accommodate the overall increase in costs of doing business. It will also be necessary to be vigilant with sponsor support.

2. Nichols College – Coventry business intern project:

Tim described where the project is as the semester has just started. Students are gearing up for the next ten weeks.

3. AdvanceCT – Regional Economic Development Study:

Monthly 4 Town Team meetings have continued since October. The core Town Staff meet monthly before the full Steering Committee meetings that are also held monthly. At the last meeting, the Steering Committee focused on the development of subcommittees that will be

assigned to specific projects/tasks. This includes: 4 town event calendar, regional open space – trail marketing resource, regional destination theme-based mini-tours, local currency, Nichols College intern competition to create a logo/slogan for the 4 town effort. It was also agreed that each Town Staff person will host meetings from month to month in a round-robin style to help share the meeting preparation responsibilities and add some variety to the meetings. The Committee consists of Town Staff, Board/Commission members, UCONN Staff, as well as other regional stakeholders.

#### 4. Target Development sites – member, staff contacts:

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. The following is a review of the updates from the members and Staff:

1011 Main Street – Husky Pizza is now open.

1159 Main Street – No update since Coventry Fitness and National Ribbon have closed. The owner continues to seek new tenants.

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

1340 Main Street – former Coventry Antiques – property on market. Final steps with the environmental clean-up should be complete this spring. Dr. Jenkins continues to be contacted on the property, due to his previous interest. Carolyn gave an update on her work.

3514 Main Street – Colvest – Staff spoke at length with the representative from Colvest on the status of Dunkin Donuts and the second phase of the project. Negotiations continue between the owner of Dunkin and Colvest. Colvest is more actively shopping the property and considering development options for the second phase.

3466 & 3480 Main Street – Vinton Village and apartments – Interior work continues to establish a juice bar in Vinton Village. Courtside Nutrition will be open some time in March. She would like to do a ribbon cutting, but the pandemic has put some limits with this happening.

1660 Main Street –Kristen reported that the owner is pursuing the demolition of the structures and clean-up of the site in order to better market it for sale.

John gave an update with the autonomous vehicle research facility that is being considered by UCONN. They would like to locate at UCONN's Depot Campus, but the University has not been

moving quickly with their interest. The Lee Farm on RTE 44 is a UCONN owned property that could serve as a potential site, along with some adjacent land that could be available.

The budget review process begins next week. It will be a challenging year due to the many difficulties that are being faced with the pandemic. There are some possible Federal funds that could be available, plus the State budget has not been finalized yet.

Some CDBG funding will be available for ADA improvements at the Hayes Homestead, Glass Museum and the Strong Porter House.

The Legacy Lost PBS program was great highlight for the Hayes Homestead and the Town was highlighted very nicely as well.

The barn that is located in the Village and owned by CT DOT will be conveyed to the Town. Paperwork is being administered to enable this to happen.

Major capital projects will be moving forward in 2021 and some into 2022, including: South Street sidewalks to Hale Homestead, RTE 44/Swamp Road intersection improvements, CT DOT will be replacing the culvert in front of Highland Park.

John described plans that are being considered for sidewalks on Daly Road to connect to other sidewalks around the Lake.

#### 5. RTE 44 Bolton/Coventry sewers – status:

The matter continues to move forward with the State. OPM responded to DEEP in writing, expressing their concern with how the matter has been handled by DEEP and that it is not necessarily an OPM policy issue at this time. DEEP has not responded to OPM or the Town since OPM's letter was released.

#### 6. Caprilands – status:

Work continues between the Estate, Attorney General's Office and Town to help enable the furtherance of the legacy of Adelma and Caprilands. The Estate also continues to take steps to address the matter of the intellectual property associated with Caprilands. There has be no update on the plan development for a new residence on the property or other improvements on the site.

#### 7. Perocchio Farm – anaerobic digester project:

Town Staff met with the Perocchio's on site to discuss their current plans to install an anaerobic digester on their farm. This will treat their manure produced on site, mix it with food remains trucked to the site and enable the creation of electricity for the farm and the sale of excess back to the grid. They have been working with a partner and the NRCS for two years to refine their

project. The goal is to construct a barn addition, digester, associated storage of treated material, electrical production equipment, and supporting infrastructure. It will be necessary to amend the Zoning Regulations in order to create viable path for permitting of the project. The project will enable longevity and ongoing support to the farm so they can compete in the national market.

8. RTE 44/Grant Hill Road/RTE 31 Node – potential development interest, discussion with land owners:

Staff has been successfully connecting with Colvest and Garrett Homes, who developed the Dollar General, to help encourage further economic growth at this important development node. Colvest is currently in negotiations with the owner of Dunkin Donuts to address the drive-thru cueing modifications necessary to the site as well as the required septic repair. Colvest is also looking to take a different, more open, approach to the future development of the second phase of the project.

The developer of Dollar General indicated that they appreciated the streamlined and fair treatment that they received from the Town for their project and they are interested in considering another project in the vicinity. Staff spoke with the developer and provided background on the property at 1572 Boston Turnpike that was previously considered by Hartford Health Care for a medical office. The site has potential for another commercial project. Staff forwarded all the details that the Town possesses on the site and the developer is shopping the site with partners that they have, such as an auto parts retailer.

9. Coventry Village Partners – Spotlight on Main Street, business collaboration:

Staff has scheduled a virtual Partners meeting for March 5 in order to check in with those associated with the Partners and discuss all the projects and activities that are occurring in Town. Also, Staff understands that some of the businesses are looking to host a small event that respects COVID protocols that highlights the businesses and encourages customers to shop in the Village. The goal is to begin to meet more regularly with the Partners and support their efforts after a long hiatus due to the pandemic.

The CT Main Street Center has scheduled their Spotlight on Main Street Program to be hosted in Coventry Village in September, assuming it will be possible to host such an event. Typically, all the Main Street community representatives and the Center converge at the host town and a social event occurs that highlights all the work that the community has done to support the Main Street model. Staff will be working with the Partners and the Center to help facilitate a safe and enjoyable event that respects the rules associated with the pandemic, assuming that will be prudent to do so.

Other items of interest:

Staff will be implementing a new communication tool with the Town's website called CivicSend. The focus will be creating an improved communication link with the town businesses. The extension of the web platform was funded by COVID Federal funds. The module links well with social media for further broadcasting.

Staff mentioned that a preliminary discussion meeting was held with a representative of East Point Energy on a grid-scale energy storage project adjacent to the electrical substation on North River Road. The proposal would be subject to Siting Council approval, not local approval. More details will come forward in the coming weeks. The project would have significant benefit to the Town when electrical interruptions of load issues occur and would be a tax producer as well.

Tim and Barbara gave an update on Lion's Club activities. A rose sale for Valentine's Day was very successful and will be extended to Mother's Day. A home based virtual cooking show on Zoom with a chef, where there is a connection with a chef cooking simultaneously is another idea is being considered. Donations would be provided to the Lion's Club to support the effort.

Kristen mentioned that CT Cares CT, Inc. will be hosting a food truck festival in May to gain funds and offer a community event. They are also pursuing other activities to generate funds to support the community.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott  
Director of Planning and Development