

To: Town Council, Economic Development Commission

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

Re: Economic development updates

Date: October 18, 2019 (**updated May 20, 2021 – in bold**)

We thought we would take a minute to share some Economic Development updates. This is to keep you in the loop and have accurate information as the social media world sometimes gets ahead of the truth. In general it would be helpful to not widely distribute this information since it can change quickly and you may be caught in passing on stale information.

Village:

1600 Main St: The old house and barn next to the School Admin building was proposed to be demolished soon to address the blight conditions by the owner, but it has not occurred. Now being advertised and marketed for commercial use: 2 acres on sewer - commercially zoned. New owners are not interested in building new gas station/convenience store. Staff has learned that the demolition is being pursued again and is expected to occur in the coming weeks. **Since no action is occurring, Staff has no choice but to pursue blight enforcement action at this time to require the property clean up. Staff is waiting for the property realtor to provide a contact name.**

1465 Main St: Former Devine's building (former small engine/boat repair). Sold to new owner who wishes to do fleet vehicle repair (oil truck) and repair of tractors for personal use. Exterior site work has been completed and has provided much improvement to the site.

Reid's: Property has been purchased by owner of Lakeview Restaurant who recently opened a take-out only pizza restaurant after he temporarily closed Lakeview. Staff is aware that a new restaurant is pursuing the site, but formal permits have not been submitted. **Staff has contacted the owner about the status of the situation, as well as the tenant/lessee living upstairs. Staff met with the new tenant and reviewed options to address the residential use of the site and consulted on permitting the restaurant.**

1340 Main St: Coventry Antiques - Environmental clean-up conducted by Red Tech (owner) who are looking for buyer. Have someone interested and trying to get CT DEEP paperwork to allow a mortgage to be issued. Prospective owner has hired an architect and engineer, and plan on a professional office. The owner is on the final steps of environmental monitoring and it should be complete by April. The property, once considered 'clean', may have an increased likelihood for sale. **Staff reached out to the owner to inquire on the status and assist with next steps as necessary and was told that the site monitoring for chemical contamination would be complete in April.**

1011 Main St: Beebe House. Husky Pizza has relocated from Downtown Storrs and is now open. Staff spoke with the owner while he visited the office and they are beginning planning and preparation to expand the kitchen amenities to be able to expand their menu offerings. He indicated that he is very happy with their new location and the choice to come to Coventry.

Sanborn's Garage: Sale unlikely without an environmental study. Eric Trott went to a CRCOG brownfields workshop in 2019 to learn what type of assistance is available. There are limited opportunities for private gas station sites. Rental is still possible. Staff understands that there had been some environmental testing done which revealed no contamination of the site. **Staff spoke to an interested party who has signed a contract to purchase the site and is working with Staff to obtain the local approvals as well as the DMV. The new owner intends to improve the site and create an attractive 'custom and unique' Japanese vehicle dealer on site. The new owner's dealer and repairer license was considered at the May 19 ZBA meeting.**

Teleflex: EDC visited with Teleflex in late 2019 and learned of the growth of the firm. They are running three shifts and looking for 15 or so more employees. Staff met with the plant manager to discuss their plans, how we may be able to work on parking issues, and how we can help in recruiting. Teleflex is now renting the lower level of the building where Pizza on Main is located for storage.

1034 Main St: Former Sanborn Auto Parts - antique shop closed – new tenant is occupying and selling pool table supplies and antiques. New owner exploring options including residential. Staff met with an individual who expressed interest in buying the property to establish an antiques store and possible coffee shop. Guidance was provided by Staff on the steps that would need to be taken to accommodate these uses.

580 Main Street: DragonFire Meadery - (Mead me on Main...too soon?) Owner will be proceeding with sampling in the mead production building which was delayed due to the need to change liquor control law. Mead is a fermented substance made from honey. The owner continues to perform work to the site to further accommodate the business. The PZC recently approved a permit to allow a deck to be constructed to serve as an outdoor public space for tastings. The owner has erected a new sign and the website is accepting orders for a variety of mead options.

1409 Main St: Former House on the Hill Antiques – Property actively on market for sale, but no inquiries have been made with Land Use Office. \$699,000 price likely not reasonable considering constraints of site.

Bidwell Spirit Shoppe: Owner of Spirit Shoppe has purchased entire building and has done minor improvements to stabilize building and rentals.

Nathan Hale Antiques: Nathan Hale Antiques is attempting to purchase the entire building, but complications have arisen with a deed restriction which appears to limit adaptive re-use. Their attorney appears to have gotten a sign-off from the State Attorney General's Office to address the deed issue.

Coventry Laundromat building: New personal training business has moved into the upper level.

Lakeview Restaurant: The owner was contemplating improvements to the cottage that is located within the limits of the outdoor patio, which would allow for it to be utilized on a year round basis for residential purposes. A ZBA variance was approved recently to accommodate this use. The owner has recently listed the vacant commercial property for sale on Woodland Road that was used for overflow parking. Staff spoke with the owner about his various commercial landholdings and the direction he is going during the pandemic, which has created large impacts to all his tenants and his business.

1159 Main Street: Location of the former Coventry Fitness. An individual who wishes to establish a tea house with limited food service has expressed interest in locating at this location. Staff discussed the various steps necessary to pursue this proposal. **It is Staff's understanding that the tea house proposal will likely not move forward due to the extent of necessary improvements to enable the food service aspects.**

1203 Main Street: Location of the former Nailed it Salon. The owner of the plaza indicated to staff that a real estate appraisal firm has expressed interest in location at this location. No permits have been submitted as of yet.

RT 44:

1600 Boston Turnpike: Former eye doctor office. The property has been conveyed to a developer who is looking to establish a Dollar General. IWA and PZC have approved the project. Construction is expected this fall. **The store is open to the public at this time and the final site improvements are being completed.**

1660 Boston Turnpike: A residence currently exists on site, although it is commercially zoned. Hartford Health Care previously expressed interest in establishing a new medical office on site, but decided not to pursue the project. Staff reached out to the developer of Dollar General to share info on the property and see if there would be interest for new development, such as an auto parts retailer. **Staff was told that the developer has purchased an option to purchase the property and has begun the search for an appropriate use for the site. An auto parts retailer has been discussed. Staff reached out to the developer to check on the status of interest and is awaiting a response. However, a realtor inquired about the potential of a professional office being located there, to accommodate Integrated Rehab. Staff is following up with the realtor on this matter.**

Dunkin Donuts: DnD wants to change their drive through configuration to improve cueing. Waiting for permission from Colvest (owner). Designer has been hired to prepare plans, which staff has reviewed and commented on. A special permit amendment will be necessary for the proposal. The owner refuses to endorse an application of DnD (the leaseholder) to allow the project to move forward. The owner's legal representative has been in contact with Staff about pursuing a Zoning Regulation Amendment with hopes to alleviate this situation. Staff spoke with Colvest on the situation, the matter of the drive-thru and septic repair remain unresolved, but negotiation continues to resolve the matters.

Colvest: Colvest has leveled out their property next to CVS and is working on a septic repair. No discussion recently on any new construction but they did have an approved permit which expired for a large plaza which could be quickly re-permitted. Staff contacted Colvest about the potential of supporting a new building for Integrated Rehab to relocate in town. They have increased space needs. Staff spoke with the owner about the DnD situation as well as the development of phase 2 of the project. The owner is looking to take a different approach with the site and is more actively considering new tenants.

Hartford HealthCare (Dr. Keenan replacement office): Staff continues to have ongoing communication with HHC and their developer on how they plan to continue to have a medical presence in town. HHC has indicated that they are in a holding pattern for new development due to the pandemic. HHC

indicated that they are looking at more regional solutions to providing medical services, other than an office in Coventry.

1776 Boston Turnpike – (former Dr. Keenan office): HHC has confirmed that a local financial advisor is pursuing the purchase of the property and is seeking financing at this time.

Cumberland Farms: A CO has been issued and it is now open to the public.

On the Go gas station: Owner was approved to make sandwiches but has not started the project. They also recently received a grocery beer liquor permit approval with PZC and the State. The owner has completed the replacement of the fuel storage tanks.

Creative Living Community of CT: Application for a mixed use at the former Crestland Llama farm was approved. They are trying to find financing for the first phase of mixed apartments and farm retail. Agricultural activities have commenced on site, as well as stabilization of the buildings. Staff worked with CLCC to submit a Neighborhood Assistance Act application with the State to gain funds to help support the construction of a 'vocational' greenhouse. CLCC is also moving forward with the farm stand and a portion of the parking lot at the front of the property. The NAA has been approved. In order to facilitate the funding, a 'sponsor' business needs to 'adopt' the project for tax credits. The deadline for this to occur is October 1. Staff is helping with outreach to gain a sponsor. One sponsor was found for the amount of \$5000 and is being pursued. CLCC had a Farm Stand Day – Open House for their new farm structure for retail sales of products. CLCC appeared at the December PZC to do a preliminary review of a revised concept plan for their development of a residential/agricultural 'hamlet'. The plans were well received by the Commission. A formal re-application for the Special Permit will be required due to the nature of the changes to the plans. Staff reached out CLCC about the next round of the State of CT DRS Neighborhood Assistance Act funding and the town's support for the application. CLCC has expressed interest and will likely pursue involvement in the program again. **Staff facilitated the application for HVAC improvements to structures on site and submitted it to the State DRS.**

Hytone Farm – anaerobic digester project: Staff met on site to review the project details. The owner is still finalizing the project design. Staff has determined a prudent path for the owner to take in order for the project to be considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission. A preliminary discussion with the Commission was held at the April 12 meeting. The Commission was very supportive of the project. The owner will need to pursue an amendment to the zoning regulations and a special permit due to the unique nature of the proposal. **Staff has prepared the draft language for the amendment application which will be presented to the Commission on May 24.**

Ladyga motor vehicle dealer and repairer location – A request to the PZC to extend the timeframe to complete the project was requested by Ladyga. At the PZC meeting of 4-12-21, the Commission recommended that Ladyga withdraw the request since there is 15 months left to complete the project and the Commission would like to see progress on the project during this time.

Other projects:

Charles Boggini Company: Staff is working with the Boggini brothers on Bread and Milk Street for an addition to their building that requires the location of a different septic reserve area. Have had productive meetings between staff and the owners to chart options to go forward. They need space to address new CDB production that they have contracts for by using their expertise in emulsions from

their soda syrup business. Staff continues to reach out to the owners to offer assistance, but indicated that they are on hold for the moment.

Vinton Village: Wicked Slice reopened in the fall of 2019. No real movement on CanDance studio space or other tenants yet. The plaza owner also owns the adjacent apartments and is hoping to tear them down and construct new units. Design for a new apartment project continues and has gotten preliminary approval from the State DEEP on septic design. Staff has been informed by the owner that they are putting the apartment project on hold at the moment due to costs. Courtside Nutrition is now open for business. A new nail salon has been permitted for the last vacant upper level unit. They are in the process of performing interior work.

Daly Road and Main: The building owner is looking to add a rear deck to the Penalty Box. Design for this has been considered. No urgent plans for the empty end unit. However, some prospective plans for interior modifications have been reviewed by Town Staff that improve the Penalty Box unit and connect it with the end unit for expanded food service. Caprilands: The Town hired an architect and engineering team to conduct a historic building assessment that is being funded by a State Historic Preservation Grant. The report is complete, and was included in a RFP for adaptive reuse. The RFP was issued in March with a May 11 deadline. Only one response was submitted that was not deemed adequate. The property on the open real estate market and an offer has been made for purchase. The prospective owner wishes to establish a farm on the premises. Staff is working with the designer to prepare plans for a new residence and agricultural use. Staff has learned that the owner is pursuing the dismantling of the residence for future reconstruction by a respectable historic reproduction company. Staff continues to work with the Fiduciary and State Attorney General's Office to discuss next steps for maintaining the legacy of Adelma as well as the intellectual property. A status update hearing was held on March 23 with the Probate Court. Staff attended the meeting. The fiduciary is pursuing the court approved penalties against Dr. Cook with his Estate to assist with closing out the financial matters with the Caprilands Estate and potentially provide funds for future legacy planning efforts.

Dimitri's: Owner commenced interior renovation project to expand take out area and shift bar further into restaurant. Permits were previously approved to begin work.

Dana Barnes – owner of Twin Hills Country Club: Staff met with Dana to discuss the improvements that he is doing on site. Dana is also a real estate developer. Ideas were shared and discussed on how he could potentially be involved in a Coventry project.

Knights of Columbus building – Snake Hill Road – Staff worked with a commercial archery club that wished to purchase the property for indoor and outdoor activities. A special permit application was approved by the PZC in April. Unfortunately, the new use will not proceed due to the impact by the pandemic. Interest continues with the property. Staff is aware that the property has been sold. The property has been sold to a party who wishes to use it as a residence. Work continues on site, but the property is now subject to a dumping violation. Staff is working with the owner to correct the situation.

Nadeau: The EDC reached out to Ron Nadeau (owner of Sabrina Pools and Industrial Park on Bread and Milk Street) to discuss his plans for the site and others that Nadeau owns. He did not wish to meet with the EDC. Staff met with Ron to discuss his current plans with the property. Both parties will keep each other in the loop as concepts are considered or interest occurs. **It is Staff's understanding that there is a new owner of Sabrina Pools. Staff is investigating to get more details.**

Sadlak Innovative Design: The EDC reached out to the owner who is located in the Nadeau Industrial Park to see if he would be interested in attending an upcoming EDC meeting to see if the Town can help. He politely declined at this time.

RTE 44 sewers: We continue to push the Town Line (Bolton/Coventry Gateway) sewer extension concept. Staff had a recent meeting with State Staff to rectify this matter. Staff has submitted a revised letter on how the project complies with the State, Regional and Local Plans as well as sewer service area maps and other details. DEEP has forwarded this information to OPM for comment. OPM has commented to DEEP, but DEEP has not responded or provided guidance to the Town on next steps. Staff attended a recent meeting with DEEP/OPM to discuss next steps. It is believed that a path will be provided to allow the Town to connect, based upon the recently adopted legislation and opinion of DEEP/OPM. **DEEP will be releasing the post scoping notice to complete the CEPA screening process and will be posted on the Council of Environmental Quality website.**

Regional Economic Development Action Plan: The consultant, AdvanceCT (formerly the CT Economic Resource Center, has completed a first draft of the action plan. The final draft is complete. A public forum, via Zoom, was held on September 16 to unveil the document. Monthly meetings continue in order to work on the implementation of the Plan. The 4 Town Team is focusing on the following: an asset inventory of unique resources within the towns for future marketing efforts; the creation of a 4 Town event calendar; open space/park mapping info resource; creating guided tours of destinations in the 4 towns; instead of Tim Liptrap's Nichols College students assisting with the creation of a logo/slogan campaign that was originally planned, Tim has offered to have summer interns work on the development of a new website for the 4 Town Project. The initial testing of students on the logo campaign did not illicit positive results, so effort will be placed on the website project instead. A logo campaign subcommittee to explore this issue further.

Plan of Conservation and Development update: The Plan was adopted on June 22 and was effective on July 1.

3399 Main Street: A solar farm project is being considered for the site. A preliminary discussion was held with the PZC and the developer to gain input, answer questions. A lease is the process of being finalized. Once complete the developer will pursue a special permit with PZC.

Meadowbrook Plaza: Staff has learned that Swiss Cleaners will be closing, Integrated Rehab is exploring other sites that will meet their space needs more adequately, and that Dr. Adelheit is pursuing a more appropriate space out of town. **Staff continues to work with the owner to assist in filling the vacancies.**

Nathan Hale Farm and Feed: Met with the EDC in the fall to discuss their new operation and how they can be of service to the community. Work continues on the property to prepare for a full opening. **Permits have been issued for the business to operate.**

Grid scale energy storage project: Staff spoke with a representative of East Point Energy about an electrical infrastructure support project involving the placement of large 'batteries' in cargo containers with transformers. The site being considered is adjacent to the North River Road electrical substation. The process will likely be many months long as they explore the project and work with the Eversource. The project is subject to Siting Council approval, not local jurisdiction.