

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Minutes

Wednesday October 3, 2012  
7:15 PM -- Trumbull Town Hall

I. Attendance

Present: Gary Bean, Vice Chairman; James Abraham; Thomas Ginis; Beryl Kaufman; Scott Wich; William Haberlin arrived at 7:40

Absent: Ralph (Skip) Sather; Jack Berg; Evelyn Zmary

Also present: Daniel Nelson, Chief of Staff; Edward Lavernoich, Economic & Community Development Director, Phyllis Collier, Finance Department, serving as clerk for the meeting.

II. Old Commission Business

It was noted that the name of anyone from the public who attends the meeting will not be asked their name until such time as they address the Commission and it will then be included with their address under public comment.

1) Review / Approval of September 5, 2012 Meeting Minutes

- Mr. Abraham moved, seconded by Ms. Kaufman, to approve the September 5, 2012 minutes as presented. Vote: 5-0 motion carries

2) Other Old Business

- There was none.

III. Recap of September 24th Plan of Conservation and Development Public Workshop

Mr. Lavernoich spoke regarding the workshop:

- Prior to the workshop, the public was asked to participate prior to the meeting by marking areas on a map where they were proud with what was going on in that area and then to mark a map where they were sorry with what was going on in the area. The subsequent discussion was very interesting.
- Planimetrics, the consultant, gave a brief overview of the process and how the firm approaches the process; spoke on the results of the interactive map and the other introductory exercise and about the summary that they will be giving at the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting on October 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Planimetrics will provide an update on their findings--both social phenomena and economic data—and come to some decision as to the variables which dictate what takes place particular to Trumbull, such as macroeconomics or land use, etc.
- Planimetrics will report on the workshops, results from questionnaires and the focus groups they have created at the November meeting. Mrs. Bratt and the planning consultant will be convening with focus groups comprised of real estate people, manufacturing individuals, etc. to find out how the Town layout works for them.
- In December, they will begin to assimilate their information and draft their findings.

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#### IV. New Commission Business – Mr. Lavernoich

##### 1) Director's Report on Current Development Activity

- Significant progress on Merritt Blvd. Digital Realty is up and being closed-in.
- 20 Nutmeg Drive. Employees are now working in the building.
- Monroe Turnpike. There is a great deal of site work going on. The Fitness Edge foundations are in and the utility trenches are in place, and all that you would expect prior to vertical construction taking place is done.
- As to proposed development activity, the Continuum Assistant Care Facility on Reservoir Avenue is coming before Planning and Zoning Commission in the middle of October. They are looking for modifications to the assisted living facility overlay zone and the zoning ordinance. They are actually looking for changes to the development standards that would allow more density. We see this as a good thing especially in an industrial zone where you are going to have lesser impact from this type of facility than from the former industrial use as a dairy. Mr. Bean asked what their probability of success would be; if they had gone for a pre-application previously and had received feedback from the P&Z, or was this the first pass. Mr. Lavernoich did not recall if there was a pre-application and he indicated that Mrs. Bratt did not think there would be an issue; however, she had expressed a concern that it might have an impact other similar opportunities around town where the overlay zone might apply. He went on to add that she had a lot of research to do before that meeting, especially as far as the possible impact on the appraised value.
- Bridgeport Cancer Center Project – Inland Wetland approvals needed to be obtained for the garage portion of the project on the Bridgeport side of the line, and the approvals were received at the end of September. On October 2nd Inland Wetlands approval was received on the Trumbull side. The next step is the zoning process and hopefully they will have the site plan and special permit application in before next month. The project will then be subject to the requirements of the state traffic commission. It is known that the State's approval will involve several traffic lights and road re-configuration.
- The Planning office has not yet heard from the Greater Board of Realtors regarding the its possible application for White Plains Road.

##### 2) Director's Report on Business Recruitment Activity

- A technology company in Stamford that the town has been working with for some times will likely be relocating to a new Robert D. Scinto building on 50 Corporate Drive, confirmed by Robert A. Scinto this week. They are currently working on the lease.
- Made contact with two separate banks regarding the DiMarco project at Long Hill Green. Mr. DiMarco will be sending a letter to the State of Connecticut in support of the Town's grant application for the Long Hill Green area.
- Working with 2 out of town restaurants for possible locations in town; one from Monroe and one from Stratford.

##### 3) Director's Report on Business Visits Progress

- Mr. Lavernoich and Ms. Bratt have met with approximately 35 business; most meetings have been individually, not taken as a team.

- A tour of the completed Marriott renovation project with the General Manager Paul McNeil is anticipated in the next week.
  - A meeting with Cooper Surgical is anticipated to occur in the near future.
  - Met with Unilever, prompted by their concern over cars speeding on Merritt Boulevard, especially coming down the hill into Trumbull Corporate Park in the morning.
  - Goal of 100 business visits, or very close to it, still planned by end of year.
- 4) Director's Report on Grant Application to CT OPM for Long Hill Green Enhancement Initiative Plan.
- The Grant Application that we submitted for the Long Hill Green Enhancement Initiative project was e-mailed to the commissioners prior to the meeting. The application was submitted to the Main Street Investment Fund Program, which is run out of the State's Office of Policy and Management. It is intended to fund public and infrastructure structural improvements in town centers where a case can be made that those improvements will promote private investment. Mr. Lavernoich suggested that the obvious area to target for this grant program would be Trumbull Center; however, the owners of the property have not finalized their plans to selectively demolish certain buildings, so the decision was made to concentrate the application on Long Hill Green. Mr. Lavernoich described what he considered to be exciting possibilities to connect the surrounding residents with the business that are currently there, and those the Town hoped to be there in the future, as well as the Pequonnock River Valley Trail and Indian Ledge Park. Mr. Lavernoich expressed the feeling of Town officials that the project concept is a good one, but because the grant program was only announced in July, time constraints did not allow a great deal of time to be spent on the submission, or the underlying plan that did not previously exist and was a requirement of the application process. Mr. Lavernoich expressed a cautionary concern that the likely target of the Main Street Investment Fund program was a town with more stress indicators, perhaps a former mill town with a fading downtown; however, he expressed his belief that the Town's application met enough of the objectives of the state's plan of conservation and development that the State will be forced to take a good look at it. He expressed that if the Town did not receive the an award in this round of funding, it would submit a better application in a subsequent round, should it occur. The State has not established a time frame for approval.

Mr. Nelson indicated that there were other avenues that the Town could utilize in order to achieve a similar result should this grant not be received. He stated that the Town is trying to be as aggressive as possible in applying for grants that relate to Town goals and initiatives. Mr. Abraham indicated that it is important to pursue as many of these grants as the Town can to get the taxpayers' dollars back.

V. Discussion of 2013 Marketing Plan

- Mr. Bean indicated that Mr. Sather sent a 3 (three) page document, laying out a typical analysis and approach; however, no meeting was held with the sub-group. He stated that he hoped a meeting would occur before the next full commission meeting.
- Mr. Wich indicated that the document should be a group effort, involving the entire commission whenever possible. He requested that the sub-group should keep all the commissioners in the loop, e-mailing when decisions are made, etc.

VI. Review, Discussion, Possible Action Related to Proposed Business Tax Incentive Ordinance

Mr. Bean indicated that input was provided to Mr. Lavernoich at the last meeting, and he was asked to provide input that could be acted on tonight.

Mr. Lavernoich provided the Commission with the Summary of Business Tax Incentive Program Ordinance – 2012, and the newest draft version of the ordinance which reflected the latest revisions by the Town Attorney, Dennis Kokenos. The summary of the new version of the ordinance was previously requested by Mr. Abraham. Mr. Lavernoich stated that he sought the formal endorsement of the commission for the concepts in the ordinance, with any issues of emphasis or concerns the commission might want to highlight. He described the probably next steps in the process, which included a review by the Tax Partnership Screening Committee. Mr. Nelson indicated that after the Committee, it would then go to the Town Council committees for their review and questions. Mr. Lavernoich stated that the ordinance language was subject to being refined all the way up to and through the approval of the Town Council.

Ms. Kaufman moved, seconded by Mr. Haberlin, to endorse and recommend the current form of the Business Tax Incentive Ordinance, as presented. The motion carried by a 5-1 vote (Against: Wich) motion carries.

Mr. Wich indicated that he appreciated the amount of time and work that has been put into this plan. However, he said that the plan should not go forward if the only reason for it is the time and work that has been put into it. He has concerns not in the specifics of the plan but in the concept itself. He expressed that there are limited opportunities to grow the Grand List in Town and that the Town should be cautious in considering a plan that can reduce tax revenues that would come from new business development or redevelopment. He was concerned that there is no information that was presented that would tend to show that the plan would have an actual, positive effect on economic development in Town. Mr. Wich noted that the plan does not target areas for which the Town has had difficulty in encouraging development. Rather, it would be available to all areas of the Town, even where there is no need for a tax incentive to encourage development. He also noted that under the plan that the Town Council would have discretion to grant tax incentives to some projects but not others depending on the Council's view of the value of the project to the Town. However, he expressed concern that granting tax relief to some projects or developers but not others on a subjective basis could be viewed in the business community as unfair preferential treatment and hurt the Town's reputation in attracting and retaining businesses. He also expressed concern that the Town focus its marketing effort on areas other than tax incentives, noting that businesses that are only interested in the tax rate will likely choose a town like Shelton.

Mr. Bean referred to the ordinance as a tool, to be used as a possible deal maker, in the event it is needed. Mr. Ginis indicated that he views the ordinance as being prepared, in case it is needed, not as a rubber stamp. Mr. Abraham echoed Mr. Wich's concern that it is not to be used as a rubber stamp. Mr. Abraham asked whether the ordinance had any potential to be detrimental to the Town. Mr. Lavernoich expressed his belief that the ordinance had no potential to harm the Town or its development efforts; it would create limits on the amount of tax incentive, and provide the Town with a basis for being selective. He stated that, at a minimum, it represents a marketing tool, which demonstrates professionalism and preparedness.

Mr. Abraham stated that the ordinance is a tool that may allow the development of properties which are not currently marketable. He expressed his hope that the Commission's recommendation to the Town Council will carry weight.

Mr. Bean called for a motion to reappoint the members of the Steering Committee. Mr. Haberlin moved, seconded by Mr. Ginis, to reappoint Mr. Abraham and Mr. Sather to the Steering Committee. Mr. Haberlin withdrew the motion. Mr. Haberlin moved, seconded by Mr. Wich, to reappoint Mr. Abraham to the Steering Committee. Vote: 5-0-1 (abstained: Abraham)

Mr. Haberlin moved, seconded by Mr. Ginis, to reappoint Mr. Sather to the Steering Committee.  
Vote: 5-1 (against: Wich)

VII. Opportunity for Community Input

There was no public comment.

Mr. Wich spoke on a Trumbull Rotary project concerning the building of homes for Veterans. They are teaming up with Habitat for Humanity. They are sponsoring an event at Tashua Knolls as a fundraiser for this project.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Wich moved, seconded by Mr. Haberlin, to adjourn the meeting. By unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.