

Town of Trumbull
Economic and Community Development Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2022 – 7:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting – Zoom Videoconferencing

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Economic & Community Development Commission of the Town of Trumbull was held via videoconferencing on February 8, 2022.

Attendance

Members Present: Beryl Kaufman (Chairman)
Karen DelVecchio (Vice Chairman)
Marshall Marcus
Shelby LeVino
Ralph Sather
Evelyn Zamary
Justin Scheuble

Members Absent: Ted Chase

Also Present: Rina Bakalar – Director of Economic & Community Development
Justin Oshins – Guest Speaker for Jeff Works
Harrison Lyss – Guest Speaker for Jeff Works
William Chin – Director of Information Technology
Gia Mentillo – Economic & Community Development Clerk

Chairman Kaufman called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of January 4, 2022 Minutes

A motion to approve the January 4, 2022 minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Marcus and seconded by Vice Chairman DelVecchio. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Kaufman noted an error on page four where Christian Heritage School was inaccurately referred to as Christian Heritage Church. She also noted several typos.

Chairman’s Report

Vote on Commission Goals

Chairman Kaufman invited Commissioner Sather to lead the Commission’s goal setting discussion. Commissioner Sather began by reviewing the goal setting document with the Commission, noting that it was disseminated via email prior to the meeting. Commissioner

Sather reminded members that they need only engage with businesses in-person as they feel comfortable doing at this time and encouraged anyone who does make in-person visits to utilize the “Trumbull Working For You” note cards to leave messages for businesses. He then asked that the Commission take a vote to adopt or deny the goals, role, and tasks as outlined by the aforementioned document.

MOTION MADE (Sather), seconded (Scheuble) to approve the goal setting document as a guide for commission members with the acknowledgement that the document can be amended at any point and that Commissioners may engage businesses at a level they feel comfortable with under current pandemic circumstances. *Commissioner Marcus abstained from this vote.*

6 – 1 (LeVino)

Motion Carried

Commissioner Marcus noted he would be abstaining from this vote due to the fact that he did not receive the document in advance.

Commissioner LeVino stated that he was against formal adoption of the document for several reasons. First, he questioned whether the Commission had a formal obligation to adopt goals or if the document was meant to simply help maintain working objectives. Secondly, he questioned why the Commission would take a formal vote on the goals and descriptions if there was no obligation to do so, stating he would rather allow the document to be a living document which is regularly reviewed as-needed. Thirdly, Commissioner LeVino stated that the goals as-outlined did not appear to be strategic in nature. He stated that if the Commission were to formally adopt goals, then he would like to see them be more strategic and afford a deeper level of engagement with the Town. He provided an example of identifying a master list of strategic objectives set forth by the Town and utilizing that as a basis for the Commission’s own strategic goals. Lastly, Commissioner LeVino stated that he would like the Commission to be more proactive by setting hierarchical actionable goals.

Commissioner Sather stated that he generally agreed with Commissioner LeVino’s comments but noted that commissioners were previously hesitant to adopt more in depth goals during the uncertain circumstances presented by COVID-19. He stated that the document in question was created to serve as a general guide for commissioners and a means of returning to the regular habit of goal setting with the acknowledgement that said document can be amended at any time.

Vice Chairman DelVecchio stated that she felt the document served as a good starting point for the Commission at this time, noting that she too would like it to be a living document that is regularly reviewed and amended. She stated she feels the Commission could benefit from having a point of reference to evaluate their progress and settle into a routine of regular evaluation and goal setting. Secretary Zmary agreed.

Presentation from Jeff Works

Director Bakalar introduced Justin Oshins and Harrison Lyss of National Realty Group as the representatives of the Jeff Works space in Hawley Lane Mall.

Justin Oshins introduced himself as the Chief Investment Officer of National Realty Group, owners of Hawley Lane Mall, and thanked the Commission for their time and support. He began

by stating that Jeff Works serves as a co-working space for individuals to utilize outside of their home or traditional office, noting that the organization is based on two pillars of success: value and convenience.

Mr. Oshins informed that similar facilities are difficult to access for many as they tend to be located in major metro centers and cost several hundred dollars per month whereas Jeff Works can be accessed for as low as \$10 per month. In addition to the main area, (which is accessible during all operating hours and affords ample working space) the 6,000 square foot facility is well-equipped with 11 meeting rooms of various sizes and technological equipment which can be reserved through the Jeff Works phone app. Mr. Oshins noted that Jeff Works will be the second facility of its kind to be launched by National Realty Group, the first of which is located in New Jersey and has proved effective in revitalizing the property by increasing traffic to the area as a whole.

Harrison Lyss added that the intent of Jeff Works is to serve as a reliable, predictable working space for locals, even if it is just an opportunity to get out of the house or have a virtual meeting without interruption. He also noted that meeting rooms can be booked for events such as commission meetings and that there is a free trial being offered for February with a grand opening being planned for March.

Finally, Mr. Oshins noted that the space will ultimately be managed by two locals who are dedicated to seeing both the facility and region thrive.

Commissioner Marcus stated that it seemed Jeff Works would need to obtain a fair number of monthly subscribers to effectively support itself and questioned how the managers intend to control the number of people utilizing the space at once. Mr. Oshins used gym memberships as an analogy to exemplify that most members will not use the space daily or even weekly.

Director's Report

Business Update:

Director Bakalar stated that ECCO has officially opened for service, noting that she has had several tremendous experiences there herself and encouraging the Commission to visit if they have not done so already. Commissioners DelVecchio and Kaufman voiced agreement. Chairman Kaufman asked whether there would be outdoor dining options in the future which Ms. Bakalar confirmed there would be.

Ms. Bakalar stated that the Mase Building was recently purchased by a new owner, Rob Vonancken, who will be a great owner and intends on improving the property.

Community Development Update:

The Director informed that the property owners of 7180 and 7192 Main Street (7182 Main Street LLC & 7192 Main Street LLC) recently completed a pre-application meeting with the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) in January and are now going through the formal application process with PZC for a text amendment and zone change which they will be presenting during the February PZC meeting. She stated that their intent is to revise the BC Zone regulations for

the area, noting that commissioners can contact Rob Librandi with any questions regarding the application. Commissioner Marcus voiced support for this application as it will be a vast improvement to the gateway into Trumbull from Monroe and has been amended to include only 1 bedroom units which alleviates concerns regarding school resources. He also noted that it will help obscure the new Amazon parking lot.

Ms. Bakalar stated that there is an application for 49 Daniels Farm Road coming to the February PZC meeting for which there are 9 letters of support from neighbors. She reminded the Commission that there was already a pre-application meeting for this historically significant property which informed the owners' intentions to convert the existing structures on the property to 11 units. Ms. Bakalar informed that the owners intend to acknowledge the historical significance of the property.

There is also a pre-application meeting being planned for a parcel at the intersection of Booth Hill Road and Unity Road which proposes the incorporation of a village district area of roughly 50 single-family homes.

Planning Update:

Director Bakalar stated that the Trumbull Center Planning Study is nearing the final draft stage, noting that the presentation of the document has been moved to the March PZC meeting. She encouraged Commissioners to attend the presentation. She further noted that the town is actively pursuing grants for the area.

Ms. Bakalar stated that the RFQ for the Trumbull Mall Study is under development. She stated the study will have a heavy focus on economic development.

Grant Update:

Director Bakalar stated that the Town received a \$1,090,000 grant to update the commuter lot next to Christian Heritage School and extend the Pequonnock Valley Trail, creating a connector to Twin Brooks Park. She informed that the project is now completely funded and will enter the design process this spring, noting that construction will likely commence the following year.

Event Update:

Director Bakalar stated that she recently spoke with the new Chairman of the Trumbull Chamber of Commerce who expressed that committee's intention to heavily focus on calendaring in-person events for the upcoming year as there is a clear need for increased networking. Ms. Bakalar stated a need to maintain close contact with local businesses during this time as they are being significantly impacted by the recent challenges posed by the pandemic.

She also noted discussions of co-hosting an annual business awards event with the Trumbull Chamber of Commerce as opposed to including it in the annual Business Appreciate Breakfast hosted by the Economic & Community Development Department. Vice Chairman DeVecchio voiced support for this, noting that a similar approach was taken in the past, and stating her intent to follow-up with the Chamber of Commerce regarding this change. Commissioner Marcus

stated that he felt it best to juxtapose the two events by conducting one in the spring and one in the fall.

The Director provided an update on the Main Street Dollars program which ended on January 31, 2022, noting that she and staff are working to summarize the economic impact the program had on each of the participating businesses. She noted hopes to obtain additional corporate funding to continue the program in the future.

Chairman Kaufman asked whether or not there are plans to distribute an Economic & Community Development Newsletter in the near future. Ms. Bakalar confirmed that she is working to distribute one for February.

Opportunity for Community Input

There was no public comment made.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:28p.m. by Vice Chairman Kaufman and seconded by Commissioner Marcus. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gia Mentillo
Economic & Community Development Clerk

Cc: Rob Librandi
Doug Wenz