

Town of Trumbull
Tax Partnership Screening Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2025 – 6:30 p.m.
Zoom Videoconference

A scheduled meeting of the Tax Partnership Screening Committee of the Town of Trumbull was held via Zoom Videoconference on March 18, 2025 at 6:30p.m.

Attendance

Members Present: Michael Colohan
Jason Marsh
Carl Massaro
Fred Petrossi
Massimo Mallozzi

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Vicki A. Tesoro, Trumbull First Selectman
Rina Bakalar, Director of Economic & Community Development
Cynthia Katske, Chief Administrative Officer
Kathleen McGannon, Chief Administrative Officer
Lynn Ormsbee, Assistant Tax Assessor
Dan Schopick, Town Attorney
Bill Chin, Technology Director
Gia Mentillo, Clerk

Director Bakalar called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

Introductions:

Director Bakalar provided an overview of the meeting agenda, noting this meeting is intended to be organizational and a follow up meeting will be conducted to address a potential upcoming application to the Committee. Atty. Schopick directed the Committee to elect a temporary Chairman for this meeting and vote on a permanent Chairman in their next meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Marsh to elect Carl Massaro as the temporary chairman for this meeting, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Mallozzi. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Massaro welcomed the Committee members and introduced the several new members: Mr. Mallozzi, Mr. Petrossi, and Mr. Colohan.

Overview of Ordinance & Application – State Statute Changes:

Atty. Schopick stated that the current Town ordinance (Chapter 18, Article IV) on the tax incentive program is limited compared to the newly amended state statute regarding the same (Sec. 12-65b). The state statute has broadened the scope of what is allowed under tax incentive programs. Atty. Schopick informed there is potentially a company looking to purchase a property in Trumbull and apply for a tax incentive through the Town. The current Town ordinance requires that an applicant be under contract to purchase a property in order to make an application to this Committee, whereas the state statute allows a business with the *intention* of locating in a municipality to put forward an application. Atty. Schopick clarified that the state statute is an enabling statute, which means it provides townships with the ability

to enter into incentive agreements within the outlined parameters but does not require municipal programs to be as extensive as the statute. He informed it is up to Mr. Massaro whether he would like the Town Council to consider adjusting the Town ordinance in accordance with any of the recent state statute changes.

Atty. Schopick previously provided the Committee with the current 10-year agreement for 100 Oakview Drive, and he noted the success of this partnership. Atty. Schopick suggested the Committee consider refining the Town ordinance and/or future agreements to ensure that tax relief benefits given to property owners are passed through to tenants in part.

Director Bakalar stated that, while the ordinance does not have to be as extensive as the state statute, all items in the ordinance must be in compliance with the statute. It is the Director's understanding that the Town has entered into two abatement agreements with local companies over the past decades, Ten Trumbull and Unilever. She informed that some towns utilize tax incentive programs extensively but recommended that Trumbull do their best to limit its use of the program as incentives may have an impact on grand list growth. She noted confidence in the Town's ability to attract quality businesses and development to the area regardless of tax incentives in many cases. It should be used very selectively.

Discussion of Previous Tax Abatement

The Director used the agreement with 10 Trumbull as an example of what she believes to be best practices for a tax incentive program. She provided a general overview of the parameters of the agreement with this developer and explained that the program met the criteria of an underperforming property and that the project served as a catalyst to attract other investment and business location to the area.

Potential Application

Director Bakalar stated it is her responsibility to review potential applications to this Committee for completeness before they are brought forth for consideration. The Director informed that there is a prospective application regarding a commercial property that is currently underperforming and whose previous owners have struggled to revitalize it. The applicant is an R&D/Technology/Manufacturing business looking to relocate from another town to Trumbull. They are currently working to go under contract for the aforementioned property so that they may make an application to this Committee. If the property is purchased successfully, the company will move its entire operation to Trumbull, where they intend to continue to invest in the growth of their business and betterment of the facility.

The Director informed the applicant intends to ask for an incentive for more years than what is currently allowed under the existing town ordinance. She provided an overview of the current circumstances and reoccurring challenges of the property for which the application is related. She noted a key obstacle for the property has been that the office building was constructed for a single user occupant and many owners have tried to use it as a multi-tenant building. Per Mr. Mallozzi's inquiry, Director Bakalar confirmed the prospective applicant would be the sole user for the building in question.

The Director informed the Committee of the current circumstances of the company in question and the opportunities they are being offered in their current municipality, noting that their current space will allow them to grow to a point but has long term limitations for expansion. She and First Selectman

Tesoro have been meeting with the prospective applicant regarding their interest in Trumbull since October and have toured their existing facility. Director Bakalar stated they are very impressed by the company's work, noting they are growing quickly and creating many quality jobs (engineers, innovators, international sales, business professionals, etc.). The company has compared the costs of expanding in their current location to the costs of moving to and expanding in Trumbull. They are still evaluating both scenarios, and their contract for the Trumbull property is contingent on receipt of support from the Town. Should the project move forward in Trumbull, the applicant intends to request that the Town Council waive building permit fees for the build out which equates to approximately \$35,000. That request will be a separate ask to the Town Council. This and other measures are an attempt by the applicant to close their financing gap from multiple avenues in order for the project to be feasible.

Chairman Massaro stated the Committee should work to compare the new state statute on tax incentive programs with the existing Trumbull ordinance and determine if they wish to alter the ordinance in any way. He noted this would require an act by the Town Council. He asked that members, Atty. Schopick, and Director Bakalar review both materials independently and provide their thoughts. Once the Committee determines how they'd like to move forward, recommendations can be made to the Town Council accordingly.

Per Chairman Massaro's inquiry, Director Bakalar stated she is not a big proponent of using tax abatements to drive development and feels it should be used very selectively on key projects meeting certain parameters, adding that these incentives are *typically* not essential to getting a deal done and can take away from grand list growth. The Director stated that, if the Committee chooses to revise the existing Town ordinance, they should do so in a limited capacity and avoid opening up the tax incentive program to the full extent allowed under the state statute. Chairman Massaro voiced agreement for this. He noted the importance of having language that allows for Committee discretion when considering applications. Mr. Mallozzi agreed that any revised ordinance should not be to the full extent of the state statute, but questioned whether there are good projects not coming to the table because the current ordinance is overly restrictive. Director Bakalar did not feel this to be the case.

Chairman Massaro explained some ways in which an abatement process can work, clarifying that the incentive does not have to be a fixed rate rather it can be on an incremental basis as site improvements occur and site value increases. He noted uncertainty regarding how the Tax Assessor Office would handle the process for the prospective application. The Chairman added that the Town can call for termination of an abatement if the beneficiary doesn't hit targets based on established agreement parameters.

Director Bakalar informed that when an application comes before the Committee, an applicant provides a projection of the tax proposal within the application. However, the Committee does not have to agree with the numbers as presented and can engage in a back and forth to attain figures that work for all parties should the Committee choose to entertain the proposal.

Mr. Marsh shared his experience in West Haven where the Town chose to include a "claw back" clause in an abatement agreement to ensure that if the property sold prior to the end of the abatement then the amount of abatement received to-date would need to be repaid to the Town. He stated this to be a good way to disincentivize a company from leaving before the Town can reap the tax benefits of its presence.

The Director noted that there is some language in the current ordinance that disallows abatements from being transferred to new property owners.

The Director offered to arrange a Committee site visit to the prospective applicant's current facility.

Per Chairman Massaro's inquiry, Director Bakalar clarified that the prospective applicant is not currently under contract to purchase the Trumbull property, but they are in the final stages of negotiations and intend to sign a contract imminently. She will work to attain an update on this timeline.

New Business

Chairman Massaro suggested that Atty. Schopick, Mr. Marsh, and himself review the current Town ordinance and state statute and consider potential changes to make. The Director stated she will do the same and suggested this be done on a parallel track as the Committee moves forward with the review of the upcoming application.

Next Meeting

Chairman Massaro stated a preference for an in-person meeting. The Committee would like to meet by the first week of April as this would allow the application to be put forward to the Town Council for May if accepted by the Committee. The Committee agreed to meet on Tuesday, April 1st at 7:00p.m. in the Trumbull Town Hall Long Hill Conference Room if the applicant is available to present at that time. The current ordinance and all relevant application materials will be proved to the Committee in advance of their next meeting.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:25p.m. by Mr. Marsh and seconded by Mr. Petrossi. The motion carried unanimously.