

Town of Trumbull
Economic and Community Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 4, 2021 – 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 May 4, 2021.

Attendance

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

Members Absent: Eric Michel

Also Present: Rina Bakalar – Director of Economic & Community Development
 William Chin – Director of Information Technology
 Gia Mentillo – Economic & Community Development Clerk

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of April 6, 2021 Minutes

Chairman Sather asked the commissioners if any changes needed to be made to the April 6, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner LeVino stated that “Database” is spelled inconsistently and should be kept as one word. Commissioner LeVino also noted that there is a typo in the “Planning Update” section.

A motion to amend the April 6, 2021 minutes was made by Commissioner Marcus and seconded by Commissioner Zamary. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the April 6, 2021 minutes as amended was made by Vice Chairman Kaufman and seconded by Commissioner Zamary. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman’s Report

Branding Project Update:

Chairman Sather spoke in regards to the naming and branding of the Reservoir Avenue project. He stated that he believes the transformation of the area to be an astounding accomplishment and, therefore, deserving of a name that affords character, energy, and increased visibility to the project and neighborhood as a whole. The Chairman also stated he sent out the completed planning report, provided by Mr. Librandi, to all commissioners regarding the area for their review. Because he is still reviewing the document himself, Chairman Sather remarked that he is not yet ready to make any specific recommendations on branding at this time, but he will prepare an outline of recommendations in the future. .

Discussion of Tashua Rd./Rte.111 (7190 Main St./Rte. 25) property:

Chairman Sather introduced Commissioner Marcus to lead this discussion. However, he precluded the discussion by stating that it is the responsibility of the Economic & Community Development Commission (ECDC) to discuss anything of economic and community importance to Trumbull, but the commission does not have the authority to direct the actions of others as it is not a decision making body. The Chairman added that the ECDC charter is available on the town website for review if needed.

Commissioner Marcus remarked that there has been significant confusion around the development of Northern Trumbull over the past several years, particularly near Tashua Road. Commissioner Marcus referred to two photographs he provided prior to the meeting to exemplify the current state of the properties.

Commissioner Marcus stated that he is particularly concerned about two things regarding the proposed development of this area: (1) its association with Long Hill Green and (2) the fact that the developer is applying for a text-amendment rather than creating an appropriate zone specific to the area. He went on to clarify that he is in favor of redeveloping the area to alleviate the blight issue, but he does not condone this approach to doing so.

Commissioner DeVecchio asked for clarity on why it was being attached to the Long Hill Green regulation.

Commissioner Marcus noted the ability to get mixed use and more flexibility but he noted the areas are not the same.

Commissioner LeVino reminded the Commission the Long Hill Green regulation was extended to the Town Hall area. The Planning and Zoning Commission previously used the regulation to add the Town Hall Green Node to address the property across from Town Hall.

Ms. Bakalar noted she sees Commissioner Marcus's point, however, the Planning and Zoning Commission is familiar with the Long Hill Green regulation and like the Town Hall node, they were considering amendments to address the specific north Trumbull area, so each area would be distinguishable within the regulation. Ms. Bakalar noted that

the property crosses the town line with Monroe and Monroe recently approved a similar village type regulation change. She noted this is still in the works and they have not presented in to the Planning and Zoning Commission yet. She explained the staff is working with the applicant, Monroe and our land use attorney. Additional discussion ensued. Commissioner LeVino noted he thought it was not appropriate for the ECDC Commission to comment right now. Ms. Bakalar noted that Planning and Zoning makes the final decision and that she did not want any part of commenting prior to the applicant having the opportunity to present to Planning and Zoning. She was concerned how this may be inappropriate and create an environment that is perceived as unfair.

Discussion continued on the timing of the applicant's presentation. Commissioner Marcus noted it could be on the 19th of May or it could be continued again. We don't know. Ms. Bakalar noted the project is at the staff level right now and she felt that should be respected.

A motion was made by Commissioner LeVino that the ECDC Commission not proactively comment on an unclear situation until something appears before Planning and Zoning. Commissioner Chase seconded the motion. Commissioner Marcus abstained. All other Commissioners voted yes. The motion passed.

Chairman Sather commented that as a branding professional, he was concerned about the use of the Long Hill Green brand. He felt it should be protected.

Director's Report

Business Update:

Ms. Bakalar discussed the 20th anniversary, Grand Re-Opening event for Tobukan Martial Arts at 100 Corporate Drive that was held on Saturday, May 1st at 1pm. Ms. Bakalar remarked that the outdoor event had a tremendous turn out with attendees spanning various ages and levels of stakeholders whilst generating a significant amount of activity on Facebook. She added that this serves as an excellent example of a business who has worked extremely hard to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their business. She further stated that this is particularly noteworthy considering the fact that the owners had bought a new building just prior to the onset of the pandemic, yet they managed to avoid taking any governmental assistance.

Ms. Bakalar informed that the Grand Opening for the Make A Wish center is scheduled for late September (possibly the 27th) and noted that Pam, the center's coordinator, has yet to receive inquiries from ECDC members to visit. Ms. Bakalar added that the center is a phenomenal site to see and highly recommended that the commissioners inquire about a private tour. She added that understanding this dynamic way of activating the Corporate Park is highly important as it will be essential in the revitalization of the area.

Finally, Ms. Bakalar stated that multiple new businesses will be opening in Trumbull throughout May and June of this year (2021), though ribbon cutting dates are to-be-determined (due to pending CO sign-off).

Ms. Bakalar remarked that the State of the Town Address, which is typically an in-person event, will be conducted virtually this year on May 24th at 9:00a.m. She noted that First Selectman Tesoro is working on a presentation for the Address that will include a video of the development that has occurred in town over the past year.

Ms. Bakalar stated that the Restaurant Relief Funding, associated with the American Rescue Plan, has been released and is open for applications. She explained that the SBA offers instructional webinars and technical assistance to restaurant owners who are looking to adapt to the current climate. Ms. Bakalar encouraged Commission members to share this information with the public to increase community awareness, noting that resources can be found on the COVID-19 Business Recovery page of Trumbull's website (or she can be contacted for additional information).

Community Development Update:

Ms. Bakalar noted several recent news articles on the new apartment complexes. She discussed the data received so far on the service drain. The number of school age children does not appear to be excessive and the projects are contributing net positive to the Grand List.

Planning Update:

Ms. Bakalar updated the Commission on the Trumbull Center Corridor study and the Mall Area plan envisioned.

Ms. Bakalar added that the development project on Daniels Farm Rd is expected to be completed within the next 12 months, sharing her expectation for a quick sale on these units.

Ms. Bakalar discussed the impact of the escalating cost of building materials.

Commissioner DelVecchio shared that she has the same concerns as Ms. Bakalar as she has encountered similar issues in her line of work. She remarked that steel is currently extremely difficult to obtain and has seen significant mark-ups as well. Commissioner DelVecchio added that even basic commercial products, such as foam, have been hard to access due to a scarcity of shipping containers.



Event Update:

Ms. Bakalar informed that the commission may be able to consider in-person events beginning this Fall but noted that it is too early for a final decision on that. She stated that the appropriate time for this decision would likely be during the June ECDC meeting.

Opportunity for Community Input

Paul Griffith proposed that the Reservoir Avenue project be named “Brevity.” Chairman Sather requested that Mr. Griffith send a note over with the suggestion so that it can be added to the list of candidates.

Final Note

Chairman Sather added a final note about communicating with Ms. Bakalar between ECDC meetings. The Chairman clarified that it is okay to communicate with Ms. Bakalar when needed, but reminded the Commission that she and her team are currently “on over load” and communications should be limited to topics of significance. Chairman Sather added that, should Ms. Bakalar require assistance, the Commission and its members will do their best to provide that assistance with consideration of their own expertise and time constraints.

Adjournment

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Gia Mentillo
ECDC Clerk

Cc: Rob Librandi
Doug Wenz