

The Economic Development Commission held a regular meeting on Tuesday, March 20, 2012, in meeting room 3 of the Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT 06470.

The meeting was called to order by Co - Chair Don Sharpe at 7:03 pm.

Present: Co – Chair Donald Sharpe, Co-Chair Margaret Oliger, Vice – Chair Walter Motyka, Martin Gersten, Jean Leonard, Joe Tarshis, Elana Bertram.

Absent: Tom Murtha, Secretary - Joe Humeston.

Also Present: Elizabeth Stocker, Director of Economic and Community Development, consultant Robert Rau, six representatives of Grace Christian Fellowship Church, Mike Burton.

Public Participation and invited Guests

Grace Christian Fellowship Church – Barry Fredericks, pastor of Grace Christian discussed the history of the church. He noted that the only way that developers are interested in the property is if there is access to sewers. Steve Gruner agreed that there has been interest if there are sewers so that church is approaching the Town to request sewers for the property. Fifty to one-hundred-eighty apartment units have been discussed if there are sewers. He presented plans drawn up by the church depicting seventy-four units and one-hundred- eighty units. Norman Urqhart said a developer is interested in a retail establishment for the 3.7 acre parcel, but not for the back piece. He noted that the State has selected this parcel as ideal for affordable housing.

Mr. Sharpe noted that the Economic Development Commission’s focus is on economic, not residential, development and that the town would need to have \$5 million for this project. He noted that the commission will not act on this tonight but will review it. Mr. Gruner said the parcel would connect from the pump station at Maplewood to a new pump station down on Route 6. Mr. Motyka said that the original purpose of the sewers in that area was to primarily promote economic development. Mr. Gruner said that the sewers have been in the works for twelve years.

Discussion focused on the commission’s mandate to promote economic development. Mr. Sharpe noted that the commission’s primary goal under the new Plan of Conservation and Development is to raise the industrial portion of the grand list by 1% in five years. Mr. Gersten noted that tax abatement could be considered as an incentive to pay for sewers. Pastor Fredericks asked if state funds would be available for this type of project; Ms. Stocker does not believe so. Mr. Motyka said that primary interest in Exit 9 has been for economic development. Ms. Stocker noted that the zoning and sewers are not in place for housing and that a combination of several Town agencies would be involved in such a project. Mr. Sharpe noted that the Board of Selectmen is having a special meeting on March 29 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss sewers in Hawleyville.

Michael Burton – Business Incentive Program. Mr. Burton, 107 Glen Road, Sandy Hook, spoke about his project at 107 Church Hill Road. He stated that he approached the town in 2008

to request tax abatement and was encouraged to get the project closer to completion and then come back. He is now requesting anabatement. **Mr. Gersten moved to recommend tax abatement as allowed under the program.** Second by Mr. Motyka and unanimously carried.

Minutes of February 21, 2012. Mr. Sharpe moved approval as presented, second by Mr. Motyka and unanimously carried.

Report by Director of Community Development. (Attachment A).

Priorities Discussion – Don Sharpe. Mr. Sharpe prepared a list of items in the five-year plan. He asked that commissioners volunteer to do projects. Mr. Motyka is working with Bob Geckle on Fairfield Hills campus use and orderly economic development by reviewing the Master Plan Review Committee’s recommendations. Ms. Leonard will assist Ms. Oliger with studies for a business incubator program. Mr. Tarshis will work on workshops for entrepreneurs. Mr. Gersten will look into town acquisition of tax delinquent properties. Ms. Oliger noted that the website is an ongoing project that Ms. Stocker is working on.

Round table update: Ongoing activities

Ms. Stocker reported that the Borough is considering changing its zoning regulations so as not to limit the use of prime real estate. She suggested that if the Borough Zoning Commission brings such changes to their regulations to a public hearing, EDC should follow up on this.

Round Table.

EDC Road Map – Mr. Motyka continues to work on this.

Best of Newtown Day – Mr. Tarshis said the event has been postponed to 2013 by the Rotary Club. He said the purpose of this will be to relate the businesses in Newtown to the citizens. He created the entity “Best of Newtown” which he registered as a business. The First Selectman has signed up to be a member of the board as well as others.

Small Business Workshops – Ms. Oliger noted that four workshops will be held in the High School Lecture Room on April 24, April 26, May 1 and May 3. **Business Incubator** – Sacred Heart staff will look at other teams in other small towns. This will be 100 hours for each person on the team. Ms. Stocker noted that the Small Business Center runs the four workshops which can be attended at other sites.**Brownfield Updates.** Ms. Bertram said there is some progress on the Batchelder property cleanup. There may be some interest in removing the scrap metal on the site. Ms. Stocker said that Russ Dilorenzo, who has a business on Glen Road, volunteered to find some companies interested in removing the scrap metal. Ms. Stocker reported that foreclosure on the former Sandy Hook Auto and Marine shop on Glen Road is being pursued.

New Business. Mr. Rau noted that there will be much development at Exit 9 and he suggested that the Town steer this.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Ann M. Mazur, Clerk pro tem