

The Newtown Economic Development Commission held a regular meeting on Tuesday, November 19, 2013, in Meeting Room #3 at the Newtown Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT 06470.

Present: Chairwoman Jean Leonard; Vice-Chairman Walter Motyka ; Donald Sharpe; James Gulalo; Al Roznicki

Absent: Vice-Chairman Elana Bertram; Joseph Humeston; Paul Fadus and Martin Gersten.

Also Present: Elizabeth Stocker, Director Economic and Community Development, Bob Rau and several members of the public.

Jean Leonard called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Public Participation:

Bob Cascella, BC Real Estate & Development, Ridgefield, CT: Spoke representing Highland Plaza located on South Main Street, Newtown. There is the possibility that a medical center tied to a hospital will become a tenant at Highland Plaza. The medical facility would like a traffic light at the entrance of the plaza. He and Highland Plaza's owner have been in contact with the Police Commission regarding installing a light either at the entrance of the plaza or at Peck's Lane to reduce the number of traffic accidents in the area and to make turning left out of the plaza easier. Approximately 53 accidents resulting in 13 reported injuries have happened in the area in the past four years. Mr. Cascella is asking for the endorsement of the EDC for this traffic light.

Michael Breede, owner Highland Plaza, South Main Street, Newtown: Also spoke asking for the EDC's endorsement of a traffic light at the entrance to Highland Plaza or at the nearby intersection of Route 25 and Peck's Lane.

Sharon Doherty, owner PJ's Laundromat, Sandy Hook: Requested additional business assistance funds as business continues to be down since 12/14. The money she might receive would be used for either a cash reserve if business continues to be slow in 2014 or for advertising. Her business has grown over the 12 years it has existed, until 12/14.

Linda Manna, owner Country Mill, Sandy Hook: Spoke regarding her concern of the impact that media vehicles will have on her business should they park nearby to report on upcoming 12/14 anniversary. Ms. Manna is concerned that the media will turn customers away during the important holiday shopping season. She would like to see STEAP Business Assistance funds be held onto in case the shopping season is hurt by media presence.

Donald Sharpe motioned to approve the meeting minutes for the October 15, 2013 regular meeting.

Walt Motyka seconded the motion. The minutes were passed unanimously.

EDC Chairwoman Report:

STEAP Business Assistance Grant: **Jean Leonard** spoke about the results of the CT Main Street branding study from last week. The report noted that \$552 million in sales are leaking from Newtown/Sandy Hook to other areas. Businesses that could be supported by the area could include: home décor, specialty retail, specialty foods, specialty clothes and dining. Phase II of the study is next. It will

concentrate on strengthening SHOP, creation of a website and work with businesses to strengthen the Sandy Hook brand. Ms. Leonard noted that there is a strong divide between Sandy Hook and Newtown businesses. Discussion ensued.

Elizabeth Stocker also noted that Phase II will focus on SHOP events and to get additional volunteers to help with upcoming events. CT Main Street will work with businesses to help them adjust to the fact that traffic from Sandy Hook School is gone for now. She also spoke about the town having a high median income but shopping is not done here. Stores could fill a needed niche by being the only one to offer a particular service or product.

Ms. Leonard asked for volunteers for the Nominating committee. After discussion, **Joe Humeston** and **Paul Fadus** were selected.

Jean Leonard noted that collaboration between the EDC and the Newtown Chamber of Commerce was not as strong as it could be. **Liz Stocker** noted that the EDC and Chamber have different focuses.

Director of Economic and Community Development Report:

- Buy Local – Betsy Paynter has arranged with the Bee t; have a Buy Local section with multiple advertisers.
- Tax Assessor Insert – has resulted in 30 new businesses being added to the business directory
- November Enews- will be sent out by the end of the week;
- Regional CEDS – A final draft report for WC CEDS will be presented to HVCO 11/21. Included in this report are the Fairfield Hills redevelopment and Hawleyville sewer project.
- The BOS meeting included an announcement regarding a \$15 million GE donation for a new community center.
- Also at the BOS meeting there was discussion regarding sewer assessments. Bethel charges much less than Newtown. Information regarding costs is uncertain at times.
- Fairfield Hills – A group of Chinese investors are interested in opening a school at FH. The investors will present at the 11/20 FHA meeting.

Walt Motyka noted that it might be helpful to have a list of things that could be holding back economic development in Newtown.

- Only 34 vacant industrial / commercial parcels are empty and 22 of those are less than 5 acres.
- Hawleyville sewers – It is expected that by the end of 2014, the Hawleyville sewers will be completed. The appraisal is underway.
- A new grant application has been submitted to study parking in Sandy Hook.

Ongoing / Old Business:

- **SHOP** – An email summary of the last SHOP meeting from **Joe Humeston** was handed out;
- **STEAP Business Assistance Grant** – Ms. Stocker said that SHOP may make recommendations for grant spending. The grant must be spent in the next year. Options include another round of business assistance, a marketing plan fund for branding and infrastructure improvements. Ideas were generated and discussed as to how the funds could be spent. Some agreed that the long term success of Sandy Hook businesses was paramount.

- **Developer's Focus Group - Walt Motyka** noted two points:
 - 1) Developers look at proposals to see if they fit the community
 - 2) Rental Housing at FH could be offered as 1-2 bedroom units, attracting professionals who may later purchase homes in Newtown.

Al Roznicki motioned to approve the meeting dates for 2014. **Walt Motyka** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

New Business:

- **Al Roznicki** introduced a concept to the EDC that would generate revenue for the town. It would require significant investment. Discussion ensued as to the merits of such proposals as revenue generators for the town.

Walt Motyka motioned for the EDC to support the light at Highland Plaza / Peck's Lane. **Jim Gulalo** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Walt Motyka motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by **Donald Sharpe**. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting ended at 9:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Christal Preszler