

The Newtown Economic Development Commission held a special meeting on Tuesday March 11, 2014, in Meeting Room #3 at the Newtown Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT 06470.

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Present: Chairwoman Jean Leonard; Don Sharpe; Martin Gersten (via phone); Al Roznicki and Matthew Mihalcik.

Absent: Vice Chairman Elana Bertram, Joseph Humeston ; James Gulalo and Paul Fadus.

Also Present: Elizabeth Stocker, Director Economic and Community Development; Betsy Paynter, Economic Development Coordinator; John Reyes and David Monaco representing Summit Property Group, LLC.

Jean Leonard called the meeting to order at 1:36 PM.

Public Participation:

John Reyes and David Monaco – Summit Property Group, LLC 146 South Main Street– spoke regarding the 18,750 sq. ft. mixed use proposed building. They hope to lease to medical and specialty retailers and anticipate that more than 50 jobs could be created in Newtown. Through the EDC Business Incentive Program, they requested tax relief for their project. **Martin Gersten** asked if past businesses had in fact hired as many employees as they had projected at the time of application for BIPs. **Elizabeth Stocker** listed past BIP applicants and noted that the businesses had generally increased employment in Newtown. **Mr. Monaco** noted that if approved, the tax relief would be passed along to tenants and that if the BIP was not approved, may possibly do the project anyway. State DOT approvals have been obtained for a turn lane in the area. **Ms. Stocker** reiterated the process for the BIP approval. **Al Roznicki** asked if the EDC is looking to give a favorable vote to all BIP applicants. **Mr. Roznicki** asked if it could be required that Newtown residents be given preference in the hiring process. It was generally agreed that this could not take place.

Donald Sharpe motioned to approve the Summit Property Group BIP application, the amount subject to the assessment of the project at completion, and forward it onto the Board of Selectmen for review.

Martin Gersten seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Meeting Minute Review:

Donald Sharpe motioned to approve the minutes from the January 28 special meeting. **Jean Leonard** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Reports / Discussion / Action:

Chairwoman, EDC

- **Meeting Date Change** – **Donald Sharpe** noted concerns that people who work out of town may not be able to make the meetings if they were held on the second Tuesdays of the month at 1:30 PM. **Al Roznicki** motioned to change the meetings to the second Tuesdays of the month at 1:30 PM. **Martin Gersten** seconded the motion and it passed with four members voting for it and **Donald Sharpe** abstaining from the vote.

- Charter Revision** – Discussion took place regarding the ways to dispose of town owned properties: auction or bid, and whether it was more advantageous for the EDC to be a board or corporation. As a corporation, the Economic Development agency could handle the disposal of town owned land, outside of the charter. The EDC wishes for the Legislative Council to continue to look at the revision while the EDC also reviews it.

- STEAP Business Assistance Grant**- The remaining funds from this grant must be spent by the end of 2014. A Brand Steward has been hired – and previously \$7,500 had been allocated by the EDC to help pay for the Brand Steward. Expanded SH streetscape work is one option for the funds. **Donald Sharpe** spoke regarding the fact that the STEAP funds were given to the Town of Newtown in total, not just Sandy Hook. The funds could be used for a developer program to bring business to the town. There was some agreement amongst the EDC. SHOP may be present at the next EDC meeting to present their proposals for the funds.

- Operating Budget FY '14-'15**-Economic Development asked for an additional \$10k in funds, and received \$5K through the BOS review of the budget. Further discussions by the BOF and LC need to take place.

- BIP – Lexington Villages** – has been approved by the Legislative Council for 7 years. The incentives will help offset costs for traffic light and sewer.

Director Economic and Community Development

- Business Visitations / Inquiries / Updates** – **Elizabeth Stocker** noted that **Betsy Paynter** has continued to visit local businesses. Sonics and Materials will celebrate their 45th year in business soon. Also, efforts had been made to reach out to the manufacturing community of Newtown with the CPACE program.

- Upcoming Seminars** – a seminar will be held on March 13 regarding internet marketing. The seminar has received coverage in the Newtown Bee.

- DECD – Brownfields Grant Opportunity** – **Ms. Stocker** stated that she has applied for a \$200K grant for Fairfield Hills to get a better idea of what is in the buildings. The state had expected to award 10 grants. 20 applications have been received.

- EPA Cleanup Grant – Fairfield Hills** – the bid for the removal of Danbury Hall has not yet been awarded. The environmental consultant is reviewing special testing methods.

Ongoing / Old Business Discussions and Actions:

- SHOP** – may attend the next EDC meeting

- Fairfield Hills Development** – **Martin Gersten** noted that he felt the \$1 lease option for buildings at FH should be pursued. **Elizabeth Stocker** noted that there has been much not for profit and arts interest in FH, and while the FHA is interested in many ideas, no funding sources have yet been identified to fund the proposals. Should some of these proposals happen in the future, there is economic development potential to happen alongside the projects.

- Developer Focus Group** – **Donald Sharpe** referenced a handout regarding C-1 development in Newtown and invited others to brainstorm. Dartmouth Company has been contacted. Discussion noted that perhaps a development corporation should contact local land owners. A tour with a developer and the ED department is happening this week. **Ms. Stocker** discussed a marketing plan which includes a spring preview in the New England Real Estate Journal. An update will be made to an EDC sell sheet. Hawleyville will be the focus of economic development due to the approval of the sewer extension. Destination Newtown is also coming

up in May. It was noted that advertising in trade journals is expensive. **Betsy Paynter** noted that she is looking into business segments that may be needed in Newtown. **Donald Sharpe** stressed the importance of reminding developers that Newtown is business friendly. **Mr. Sharpe** noted that he believes that the housing component of mixed development is necessary. **Jean Leonard** noted that the town boards and residents could be further educated as to the benefits of economic development in town.

Donald Sharpe motioned to accept the following: That the EDC enacts the following plan to attract responsible and appropriate commercial and industrial development to Newtown by focusing on the following plans and programs:

- Enact Ms. Stocker's marketing plan of 2/14/14, emphasizing one or more of Newtown's neighborhoods with comprehensive printed materials and targeted outreach.
- Stress Newtown's business-friendly programs (Fast Track permit approvals, improved zoning regulations, POCD highlights, tax incentives and special zones for large stores.
- Support a limited housing component as a user-friendly draw to mixed commercial development.
- Engage a consultant, via RFP, to begin a targeted program contacting and assisting developers for large, vacant publicly-owned and private tracts. (dependent of sufficient funding)
- Emphasize and promote the availability of existing vacant building space.

Al Roznicki seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Al Roznicki asked if the town could generate revenue through ways other than taxes.

Elizabeth Stocker mentioned a shared services (business incubator) program, Access901, in Manchester. It is associated with Manchester Community College. Such a venture could be a possible revenue generator. **Mr. Roznicki** noted that perhaps funding could be obtained through bonding for such a project. **Mr. Roznicki** will look into opportunities for the town.

Jean Leonard motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by **Donald Sharpe** and passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 3:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Christal Preszler