

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING

Essex Town Hall – Essex, CT

September 12, 2018 4:00 pm

In attendance: Chairman Janet Peckinpagh, Susan Malan, David Winstead, Brian Weinstein, Peter Decker, Betsy D'Amico and Russel Smith.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Peckinpagh at 4:02 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Peter Decker to approve the August 8 meeting minutes. Brian Weinstein seconded the motion. All in favor.

INTRODUCTION

Visitors: None

Commissioners: No additional comment.

REPORT FROM EDC CONSULTANT/SUSAN MALAN

New stairs are being installed on Main Street to access the Connecticut River Museum (CRM) Lay House Property from the sidewalk. CRM is funding the stairs. Carlson Landing restaurant project is proceeding on schedule. Former Wright's Restaurant is being marketed for lease – there is another new deal in the process, but no update. 53-55 Main Street, Essex is for sale. Essex Station Apartments have five (5) units remaining to be leased. Hope Partnership received approval and a \$3.93 million grant to convert the upper floors in Spencer's Corner from commercial to residential. The pick-up/drop off dry cleaner at 31 Main Street, Centerbrook is open for business. The Essex Restaurant will be splitting their space and creating a new Mexican Restaurant, which can be accessed through a rear door. A grand opening is planned for October 3, 2018.

Zoning Officer Report

Approved Permits:

- Application No. 18-76 – 12 Plains Road, Change of Use: Harpin Associates.
- Application No. 18-78 – 125 Bokum Road, two new signs for Walgreens (previously Rite Aid).
- Application No. 18-86 – 31 Main Street, Centerbrook, new use: Essex Cleaners, a drop-off/pick-up site for an off-premises cleaners.
- Application No. 18-87 – 9+11 Novelty Lane, new use: Bretsomers Design
- Application No. 18-95 – 6 Main Street, Centerbrook, new use: Brewpub

Special Exception:

- Application No. 18-14 – 6 Main Street, Centerbrook, site plan review to modify a previous special exception. Approved to allow a smaller tasting room and to include a 100-seat event space

News:

- A resident may be proposing retail uses, both principal and accessory, within the Business District (Plains Road). The Ivoryton Congregational Church has been the topic of many questions. People are asking if the building can be office space, or a brewery, or an event location for weddings and an office space.

ACTION ITEMS: None

DISCUSSION ITEMS –

Update on UConn partnership:

- A faculty advisor, Dr. Norman Garrick, has been assigned for the senior design team. Dr. Garrick is available to provide advice and expertise to the students. The students instructor will also be available to help students with this project. There are 86 students being interviewed and a final team will be chosen. An initial meeting will be set up soon through the students. During the fall, the students will collect data, do preliminary calculations and assessments, and create a proposal with their design ideas. During the spring, the students will complete the design consisting of a final report, drawings, a class presentation and a poster presentation. The final project presentation is expected to be complete by May, 2019. Ms. Peckinpugh will write an announcement to be posted in Essex Events regarding the start of the project.

Reformatting zoning regulations for Plains Road:

- Mr. Joe Budrow, Zoning Enforcement Officer, requested the Economic Development Commission to share their opinion with the zoning commission regarding reformatting the zoning regulations. A resident has proposed changing regulations to allow Plains Road to be a principle use and a retail use. Retail is not allowed under current regulations in the Business District (Plains Road). Special regulations have been made for Scott's Farm and Clark's auto detailing. Variances were also approved for Cliff's Meats and Porky Pete's. Another example is The Leatherman's is also using the property for accessory retail. Mr. Winstead recommended that the zoning regulations stay as they are. Mr. Cook is not as concerned with the expansion of retail because it can easily be controlled with sanitation and health requirements, as well as traffic and parking needs. Ms. D'Amico mentioned she likes the idea that people would not have to keep coming back for variances and that the process could be made simpler, but the reality is that the regulations are not being enforced. Ms. Malan mentioned Form Based Code Zoning. A general opinion concluded that there is a failure to enforce regulations due to lack of staffing, etc. Ms. Peckinpugh will write an opinion stating that there is lack of enforcement of the current regulations.

Upcoming Guests and Meeting Locations

The next meeting will be on October 10, 2018 at 4:00 pm at Los Churros, Centerbrook.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and seconded the Economic Development Commission unanimously **VOTED** to adjourn at 4:55. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kate Tucker, Commission Clerk