

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

Essex Town Hall – Essex, CT

December 12, 2018 4:00 pm

In attendance: Chairman Janet Peckinpaugh, Susan Malan, Brian Weinstein, Peter Decker, Betsy D'Amico, George Sexton and David Winstead.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Peckinpaugh at 4:05 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by George Sexton to approve the November 14 meeting minutes. David Winstead seconded the motion. All in favor.

APPROVAL OF 2019 CALENDAR

Motion made by Brian Weinstein to approve the 2019 calendar. George Sexton seconded the motion. All in favor.

ELECTION OF CHAIR and CO-CHAIR

Nomination made by George Sexton to elect Janet Peckinpaugh as the Chair. Peter Decker seconded the motion. All in favor.

INTRODUCTION

Visitors: UConn Design Team: Professor Norman Garrick, Andrew Clark, Stephanie Bogue, Sheila Khayami, Yogesh Yagnik, Sam Gavish and Lauren Athay

Commissioners: No additional comment.

REPORT FROM EDC CONSULTANT/SUSAN MALAN

Carlson Landing restaurant project proceeding on schedule. Centerbrook sidewalk, lighting & streetscape improvements proceeding with work to begin in the Spring of 2019. Met with an area resident researching potential “maker space” type facility in Essex and there is currently no update. There were email exchanges with River Valley Artists, a newer group that recently had an open studio event. They are interested in “pop-up” space in Essex. There had been additional exchange with a new interior decorator in town. Update – One Main Street, Essex property owner may consider allowing pop-ups while their property is on the market to be leased/sold. One other property owner has made arrangements for a pop-up at the former antique shop, the details on this are pending. On November 23rd, Zoning Commission approved the application for apartments instead of retail, as long as the footprint of the building is not being changed.

Zoning Officer Report

None Submitted

ACTION ITEMS:

UConn presentation: The UConn design team leading the project prepared a presentation on the first steps they have taken to assemble a master plan. They discussed the objectives they were

looking to improve in Essex Village, the challenges associated, the research and observations they have done thus far, and the further research that is needed.

- What they want to do: The students are looking to make Essex Village more pleasant for people on foot. They would like to make the Village more conducive to biking, and improve the parking. Lastly, they would like to enhance the entrance to the Village by building upon what is already there rather than taking away the historic aspect.
- Challenges to consider: Some of the challenges the students encountered while researching is flooding on Main Street and the width of Main Street, parking issues, such as the current parallel parking, as well as private parking lots. Slim sidewalks running through Pratt Street were also of concern.
- Potential options: The students presented some potential options to fix the issues they found including making the entrance to Essex Village more manageable by adding a traffic circle, using a street materials, such as cobblestone crosswalks, angling the parking spaces on one side of the street was suggestion, as well as adding a bike lane. They would also like to try to calm traffic and stimulate shared spaces.

After the presentation there were question brought up by members of the EDC.

- Mr. Winstead suggested that the students find out how much bike traffic there truly is, taking into account the winter months, as well as summer. He also thought it would be helpful for the students to look at other small New England towns for inspiration, and in reply the students mentioned they have been comparing Essex to Nantucket. Mr. Winstead recommended that the team gets in touch with a historian, or someone who knows the town well.
- Mr. Decker asked if there was any difficulty finding data on the town. In reply the students said they have been getting some of their data from the town's website, and that they have been given a few sources to contact. One concern that arose was the traffic circle idea and whether it would be conducive to the activities that take place around town. Mr. Decker also mentioned that it would be a good idea for the students to look at old aerial photographs of the town.
- Ms. Peckinpugh recommended that it would be helpful to get the average speed of the downtown traffic from the local police station, which is possible because some of the roads have speed radars posted.

DISCUSSION ITEMS –

Plains Road:

- The property regarding the issues with following regulations (boats visible from the road, etc.) was discussed and looked into. It was found that the requirement for a fence to be put up was not in fact a requirement, it was merely a recommendation by zoning.

There was discussion on what the EDC can and cannot do with their authority. It was stated that the recommendations given by the EDC should be generic, and not specific to a particular business or property owner. The interpretation of why the EDC was established was also discussed. Mr. Winstead suggested that there should be a revision of what the EDC can and

cannot do, and there should be a move to modernize and update it, since these rules were made 20+ years ago when the commission was first established.

Upcoming Guests and Meeting Locations

The next meeting will be on January 9, 2019 at 4:00 pm at the Essex Town Hall

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Brian Weinstein to adjourn the meeting at 5:02 pm. Peter Decker seconded the motion. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kate Tucker, Commission Clerk