

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING via Zoom
February 10, 2021

Present: Chairman Janet Peckinpaugh, Brian Weinstein, Betsy D’Amico, Robert Day, Tom Nichols, Susan Malan.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Peckinpaugh at 4:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion made by Brian Weinstein to approve the January 2021 minutes. Robert seconded.

INTRODUCTION:

Janet welcomed new members. Tom Nichols as the new commissioner and Susan was the Economic Development Consultant and is now going to be a member of the commission. Susan mentioned that she has not been sworn in yet so cannot vote.

Visitors: Doug Domenie- Safe Harbor Marinas

Doug introduced himself. He let everyone know that Sun properties bought Safe Harbor Marina, but they will be keeping the name and management and in the field employees should be staying in place. Sun is looking at various projects and they will be great for Safe Harbor and Essex. Tom asked about Siren’s Restaurant- Doug said they had a good season last year and plan to be back this year. The boat show will be April 30th, May 1st and May 2nd this year and will meet with all CDC guidelines. There will be a large area so everyone can spread out. The tightest area would be the ferry to bring everyone back and forth. Siren’s should be open by then. Dockside is taking over the old Abbey’s Restaurant. They were open and then closed for renovations. They are doing interior improvements in the kitchen and dining area. They will be serving lunch and dinner. Siren’s has zoning and septic issues. Back in 2006 when it was Wally’s- they had a permit to have 30 people capacity and over time that grew to 55 or so but the permit wasn’t adjusted. Now, they are saying it needs to be 30 people because of septic concerns.

They are also looking at Essex Island. What further development can be done there- right now they are just looking at it. Ferry starts operating on April 1st and runs during the time the bridge is closed. But we are obligated to open the bridge if there is a need to get out.

Right now, the marina is signing up for slips- many have been already paid for the upcoming season and they are 17% ahead of last year at this time.

There was discussion on what Sun Properties is hoping to do – expanding to add more slips for transient boats or groups of boats that want to come in for a short period of time. They are not looking to expand the seasonal slips, just the transient slips right now. Janet wanted to know if the process was difficult or long to get through. Yes, it is somewhat long and difficult, but they are more commenting on the project, so it is not as formal.

Safe Harbor is speaking before the Harbor Commission. Janet mentioned that our commission does not have a say in changes. For instance, we have been trying to get a walkway or sidewalk along Ferry St. and so far it hasn’t happened. Janet explained how they have worked with UConn Engineering graduate students for 2 years to come up with plans for this but right now it

hasn't been approved to go forward with the design that we came up with. Doug mentioned that you would need to keep room for big boats to come down the road and cross as they take wide turns. Janet said it was more of a visual barrier than a physical barrier. It is kind of like the markings on a road that look like a speed bump, so people slow down when they come upon them, but they are not really speed bumps. If Doug could put in a good word for us, that would be great.

It was mentioned about the changing character of the downtown. People don't want to visit real estate or finance shops when they come into the town. They want more retail and food.

Discussion on retail shops that have been in town say that they get foot traffic but not many spend money. With the high rent and the money not coming in, many of those businesses could not make it.

Everyone thanked Doug for joining us. It was very informative, and we all look forward to him joining us in the future.

Updates:

Since we do not have Joe Budrow anymore, we don't have any zoning information to share. Robert did you hear anything from the P&Z meeting? Robert said they have had only 2 or 3 meetings and are waiting on Carey Duques to get settled in. She just started last week. Joe is going to stay on 2-3 weeks to help. Susan and Janet will be meeting with Carey next week.

CONSULTANT REPORT:

We no longer have a consultant and will wait for Carey to settle in to get information.

REPORT FROM ZONING OFFICER:

We are waiting for Carey to settle in to get an official report but has anyone heard anything going on in town? Ingrid Bergman Interiors hopefully will be open in May but they are still in Holland right now. It depends on what goes on with COVID. Privateers and Provisions? Heard opening mid March/April. How about Black Seal? Have not heard anything- they moved furniture in but that is it.

ACTION ITEMS: None

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

Janet suggested tabling this until next meeting after they meet with Carey.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

Upcoming Guests and Meeting Locations:

The next meeting will be Wednesday, March, 10, 2021 and Carey Duques has committed to join our meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion was made by Robert Day to adjourn the meeting at 4:34 p.m. Brian Weinstein seconded the motion. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Sadlowski, Commission Clerk