

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING via Zoom**  
**March 10, 2021**

**Present:** Chairman Janet Peckinpaugh, Brian Weinstein, Peter Decker, Susan Malan, Betsy D'Amico, Tom Nichols and Robert Day.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion made by Peter Decker to approve the February 2021 minutes. Brian Weinstein seconded.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Janet introduced Carey Duques. She is the new Land Use Official and Zoning Enforcement Officer. Janet opened up the floor to questions for Carey. Peter asked does she envision making changes to the application process and the way they are processed. Right now, no one is the gate keeper, it takes forever to get it processed and many applicants get frustrated when they are told to do something and go back when it is done only to be told they now need to do another thing. Can it be done all at once to make the process smoother and cut down on frustration for the business owner and/or homeowner. Carey says over time she envisions this as a smoother process. Currently the building permit application is online. This should help smooth out some of the process and she hopes to have more applications online in the future. This would allow staff to access what is in the queue at all times. She mentioned that she had met with Janet and Susan to see what the EDC has put into place. She saw the brochure that helps explain the process to applicants- there are a variety of applicants so the process would be different for each. She explained that right now there is a great deal of communication in the land use department. They have meetings and talk over what is going on so hopefully that will help with streamlining the process as well. Once the program is up and running, it will be have the ability to produce reports by whatever category you would like. Right now, Carey is using the excel spreadsheet format that Joe used. This works well but it definitely will be streamlined once everything can be online.

Janet asked for an overview with what Carey has been working on this past month. Among other duties, she has sat in on joint Board of Planning and Zoning Commission. She has reviewed the applicants that are submitting applications and making sure they are not missing anything, checking to make sure what improvements comply with what regulations.

Janet asked what can the EDC do help her? She mentioned that John Guskowski , the consulting planner, is writing the Request for Proposal (RFP) to have a consultant (historian) develop a nomination for Essex Village to become a Historical District. It would be helpful to work together to share this information with residents and businesses about what this would mean for Essex. This is a designation and would allow us to apply for grants under the Historic District. Would it be possible to write something up and put it on the EDC website? Janet and Betsy will write up something that could be put up on the website. They will speak to John and see where he is on this and how this information could be helpful. Maybe put an email blast to educate businesses and residents as well. This could possibly go into the next Essex Events. Carey said she would be happy to speak to John about this as well. The town received

approximately \$20,000 grant to have the consultant write the designation. He is putting evidence together to say why Essex should be a Historic District. While this designation will help us get grants, it will have nothing to do with zoning classifications. It is an honorary designation. Janet asked if Carey wanted to add anything. Carey wanted to mention that she received a nice note from Talbot's congratulating her on her position and wanted to support woman in these roles.

**Visitors:** Carey Duques

**Updates:**

**Planning and Zoning Report:**

The following applications have seen activity since the last submission to the Essex EDC:

**Approved Zoning Permits:**

**Application No. 21-3** – 6 Main Street, CTBK– New Use: Deep River Roasters

This spot is a café space and they had their soft opening last weekend. They were extremely busy and will be open Thursday's, Friday's, Saturday's and Sunday's. Besides coffee, they will be serving scones and bagels. These come from 8 Mile Bakery in Deep River. He has his place in Deep River as well.

Has anyone heard about the brewery? Yes, they are shooting for a July 1<sup>st</sup> opening as long as Covid restrictions allow. Due to Covid backlogs, the bar and kitchen are not done yet, the items are on backorder.

How about the Piano Factory? This is under litigation. The power is not back on yet.

**Application No. 21-5** – 37 Pratt Street, SX– Improvement: Deck replacement at Safe Harbor Dauntless Shipyard

**Application No. 21-6** – 31 Main Street, CTBK– Change of Use: Bickelhaupt food service shop

This is next to Nutmeg Pharmacy. It is a Herbalife offchute. It is also known as Elite Nutrition.

**Application No. 21-9** – 53 Main Street, SX– New Sign: Privateers Pizza and Provisions

Any updates? They are hoping for a April 1<sup>st</sup> opening. They currently have a suggestion box to see what townspeople would like to see them carry.

Has anyone heard anything about the IGA? They tried to get Robert's to come in but they are not interested. They would like to get another grocery store in that space.

**Application No. 21-10** – 37 Pratt Street, SX– Improvement: 14' X 18' Pool Pavillion

**Application No. 21-13** – 10 Bokum Road, CTBK– New Use: Hudson, Kilby and McCauley

**Application No. 21-14** – 124 Westbrook Road, CTBK– Improvement: Creating one contiguous office space out of two; Congent Holdings, LLC

**Application No. 21-15** – 9A Novelty Lane, SX– New Sign: Alchemi Wealth Management

**Application No. 21-17** – 51 Main Street, SX– New Sign: Essex Ice Cream LLC- Sweet P’s

**Application No. 21-19** – 36 Plains Road, CTBK– New Use: Office for Michael Webster Painting

**Application No. 21-20** – 10 Main Street (2 Nott Lane), SX– New Use: Plates, yoga and children’s dance

**Special Exception Applications:**

Discussion and possible vote on **Application No. 20-04** – **Industrial Park, LLC, 35-41**

**Industrial Park Road** – An application for a Special Exception to locate a self-storage facility within an existing building.

**Application No. 21-1** – **Connecticut Coastal Academy, 192 Westbrook Road.** An application for a Modification to a Prior Approval to allow the location of an outdoor fenced in recreation area and tables.

This was discussed. They put in a fenced area and recreation area with tables to make it safer and more attractive.

Has anyone heard anything about the Spa? Yes, it is being considered for an Artist studio area. He has interesting ideas for the space with the thought to build smaller cottages along the South Main St. area. The buyer is a local person.

**Site Plan Review Application:**

None

**Petitions for Text Amendments:**

None

**News:**

Carey Duques started February 1, 2021 as the new Land Use Official. She will be responsible for staffing the Planning and Zoning Commission, ZBA, and Wetlands Commission. She will be working with John Guskowski, consultant planner on planning projects. Several key projects include looking at the zoning regulations and working with the PZC to craft and adopt changes to the regulations; reviewing and updating the Wetland regulations; and issuing a Request for Proposals for a consultant to write the nomination to designate Essex Village a Historic District.

Lofts as Spencer’s Corner have been issued a Certificate of Occupancy. The Lofts contains 17 units of mixed income rental housing; 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units are available.

**ACTION ITEMS:** None

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

None

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None

**Upcoming Guests and Meeting Locations:**

The next meeting will be Wednesday, April, 14, 2021

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion was made by Peter Decker to adjourn the meeting at 4:46. Robert Day seconded the motion. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Sadlowski, Commission Clerk