

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING via Zoom
April 14, 2021**

Present: Chairman Janet Peckinpaugh, Brian Weinstein, Peter Decker, Susan Malan and Betsy D'Amico

Absent: 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 March 2021 minutes. Brian Weinstein seconded.

INTRODUCTION:

Visitors: None

Updates: None

Planning and Zoning Report:

The following applications relating to businesses and business use for April 2021:

Approved Zoning Permits:

Application No. 21-26 – 124 Westbrook Road, CTBK– Creating office space out of storage space

Application No. 21-27 – 6 Main Street, Suite 113, CTBK- Professional office use for Silver Fern Healthcare, LLC

Application No. 21-30 – 53-55 Main Street Essex- Replace two existing signs with signs for Privateers Pizza and Parking for Carlson's Landing

Application No. 21-37 – 63 Main Street Essex- Add a sign to the building at Carlson's Landing Restaurant

Special Exception Applications:

Request for a modification to **Application No. 20-04- Industrial Park, LLC 35-41 Industrial Park Road**. Applicant would like to increase number of units to 300 where original approval included a condition that units were not to exceed 250.

Janet asked if anyone had anything they wanted to add. Brian asked if anyone had any information on the spa. All responded that they have heard nothing and there is no closing yet. Also noted that it is not public information yet.

Also discussed was the boats and trailers on Plains Rd. We should take pictures and send them to Carey.

Site Plan Review Application:

None

Petitions for Text Amendments:

None

News:

The CT House of Representatives approved legislation that relaxes restrictions on outdoor dining and retail operations through March 31, 2022 and allows municipalities to expedite permanent changes to their zoning rules if they wish to expand the availability of outdoor dining and retail activity.

ACTION ITEMS: None

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Janet mentioned that when George was working with us, he was always able to vote and make up the quorum, but Robert is not able to do either one of those. Because of this, we need to be better about attending the meetings so that we have a quorum and are able to vote. Discussion about how even when we are able to go back in person, Zoom should be available for those that cannot attend in person but would be able to attend via Zoom on their phone. Everyone agreed this was a great idea.

Peter asked if we had a general email address for the EDC that would be monitored by a few of us. Not sure if we do, but it could be on the website. **Note-** as I was typing minutes, I checked out the EDC website and do see a tab to Contact the EDC. When you click on it, there is a form that says: Please fill out this form and someone will get back to you as soon as possible. The form has a spot for Name, Email address, Subject and Message.

Peter suggested that we make up EDC cards that have our purpose and an email address that we can hand out as we talk with businesses. All agreed this was a good idea.

OLD BUSINESS:

Janet asked if it was ok with everyone to write a letter to the Board of Selectman. Janet met with Ryan and Carey regarding the UConn project that the students worked on. It looks like this project is going to be approved. At this point, the plan would be as you are driving down Main St. and turning onto Ferry St- on the left side of the road would be a barrier there made with wooden flowerpots and then paint stripes where to walk. Ryan's crew would make the flowerpots and put them up as a barrier. We can figure out how to get flowers into the pots once they are put in place. This design would help with foot traffic in the road. It would be a temporary fix for this summer. Norm really liked this idea. We would also apply for a grant to put a permanent sidewalk in that area. Because of connectivity, we can apply for this grant. The

sidewalk would connect from one sidewalk to the other. All agreed this was great and the letter should be written.

NEW BUSINESS:

Janet got right into new business with a request for the members to do “homework” over the next month. She requested each member to do two things: First, go through the Plan of Conservation Development Report and mark off what we still should be doing and what would not be valuable for us to continue to do. The second item would be to call on two businesses in town before our next meeting. It doesn’t matter what two you choose. Janet would like them to be in person visits but could be a phone call if you cannot get there in person. Ask them how business is, any glitches that they feel we should know about and possibly bring back to the town. Let them know we are here to try and help the businesses in town. Before Covid, we were better at this as we did have our meetings at different locations in town. Susan also was good about checking in when she had the position but since that position has been eliminated, we all need to do it. An example that Janet gave was she has a friend who put a small business in the house, she wants to remodel a small space but needs a variance due to a dormer but it is taking a long time, she asked why it is taking so long and why should this be so hard to go through. These are things that we might be able to guide the business through and bring it up to Carey and the town.

Peter asked when we go talk with businesses- how should we organize what we talk to them about? We would like to have them stay focused on information and not be a gripe session.

Janet said you should be in there to introduce yourself as an EDC member and see if they have any had any comments that would like us to take back to the town. Let them know we are glad they are in town and would love to support them anyway we can. There was a discussion that many businesses are sensitive due to Covid restrictions as they have been hit hard. Janet mentioned that since Carey has been here, she has been very good about passing information to the businesses that they may not have heard about before.

There has been frustration in the past about who the EDC is and why we are here. If we are not helping, then what good are we? It does seem like we will have more power to bring items to the town for consideration after the short discussion with Norm. Hopefully, when this happens, this won’t be a frustration to everyone.

Upcoming Guests and Meeting Locations:

The next meeting will be Wednesday, May 12, 2021

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion was made by Peter Decker to adjourn the meeting at 4:43. Betsy D’Amico seconded the motion. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Sadlowski, Commission Clerk