

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING via Zoom
August 12, 2020

Present: Chairman Janet Peckinpaugh, Brian Weinstein, George Sexton and Peter Decker.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Peckinpaugh at 4:02 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Peckinpaugh proposed to table the approval of the last month's meeting until next month so the committee members have a chance to review them.

INTRODUCTION:

Visitors: None

Commissioners: None

REPORT FROM EDC CONSULTANT/ SUSAN MALAN- June/July

- Susan gave the report to Chair Peckinpaugh to present as she was unable to attend this month's meeting.
- Town has a re-opening advisory committee that meets every other week- helping businesses with up-to-date information on Governor Lamont's updates.
- 8 Main St.- leased to a decorator/designer. They were to open in April- have a zoning permit but due to Covid did not open yet. They did sign a year lease. No update on when they will open.
- Discussion on Olive Oyl's parking lot.
- Red Balloon was demolished.
- Abby's Restaurant closed.
- Safe Harbor closed. Heard there were parties interested.
- Siren's is to open- owners own Haywire in Westbrook which is very popular. They are Essex residents. They are putting a retractable bridge over to the Island and have a permit. They plan to stay open all year.
- Dry cleaner in Centerbrook closed.
- Gather Again is in where Gather was. It is believed to be the same place, just with an updated name.
- There is a gym in Middletown that would like to relocate to Essex- they are currently looking for a place.
- There is also a coffee roaster that is looking for a space in Essex.

REPORT FROM ZONING OFFICER JOE BUDROW:

- No report this month.

ACTION ITEMS: None

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

OLD BUSINESS:

- Brian asked about the UConn project. Janet said a decision was made to not use them this year as it is not in the budget. May try to implement UConn's plan in the spring. We will concentrate on the complete business project from UConn- try to continue the sidewalk on Ferry St. and institute more seating in front of Pough's.
- Janet mentioned that Thursday night in the village has been popular with locals. Olive Oyl's is filled. Many are walking around. Not sure if they are patronizing the businesses but they are walking around the village.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Janet discussed the possibility of changing the role of the EDC Consultant position. She almost sees the role entailing going out to other towns/businesses giving presentations to attract businesses to town. Reach out to certain places to show other areas what we have to offer. We should go after specific areas such as small manufacturing or businesses that are online already that would like a small window display for presence. In order to attract tourist business, we need them to love to come and walk our town. The EDC would help identify businesses and the consultant is the point person to make appointments to see them. We need the role to be more proactive. Brian thought this was a great idea but there is legwork that needs to be done. Possibly have the consultant concentrate more on that than on meetings. Discussion around how to make Essex a boating destination. In order for that we need great restaurants and shops. The Essex Yacht Club has brochure that talks about the town- maybe more of that.
- What is going on with the IGA? There is still a lease in place and needs to go through the proper legal channels. Because of that, it cannot be put up for rent yet.
- Peter talked about inspectors coming into businesses that they have already inspected recently and finding violations that were not a problem prior. Discussion around the reason could be Black Seal fire.

Upcoming Guests and Meeting Locations:

The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 9, 2020. Peter asked if there was a possibility to have the meeting in person. Janet said possibly for the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion was made by Brian Weinstein to adjourn the meeting at 4:36. George Sexton seconded the motion. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Sadlowski, Commission Clerk