

D R A F T

Economic Development Commission
Regular Virtual Meeting Minutes
January 4, 2021

Present: Joe Mirra, Chair
Mark Gingras, Vice-Chair
Hank Baum, Commissioner
Gary Fappiano, Commissioner
Rosemarie Preneta, Commissioner
Jim Wolfe, Commissioner
Anthony Bracale, Alternate/Voting Member
Rob Fritz, Alternate*

Absent: Patricia Cymbala, Commissioner

Others Present: Tim Ryan, Economic Development Specialist
Lynn Wolff, Secretary
Kathy Lilley, Exec. Dir., WCI
Scott Hanley, GovMedia
Atty. Jim Loughlin
Christopher Reagan, Sr.
Shirley Shadish
Lauren Takores, R-J
Ed Hohmann
Unidentified callers: LH, Caller 2, Caller 3

Chair Joe Mirra called the regular virtual meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 6:32 p.m. and asked Alternate Bracale to serve as voting member. Chair Mirra reviewed how the EDC would conduct the virtual meeting.

1. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Chair Mirra led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. **Discussion and Possible Action on Regular Virtual Meeting Minutes dated December 7, 2020** – Jim Wolfe made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted; Mark Gingras seconded the motion. By a unanimous vote, the motion carried.
3. **Election of Officers** – Jim Wolfe made a motion to nominate Joe Mirra as Chair and Mark Gingras as Vice-Chair, mentioning that each has done a great job this past year; Gary Fappiano seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79

4. **Review of monthly Expenditure Report** – No questions on the November report.

5. **Committee remarks**

- **Marketing**

- **Update on committee activities** – Mark Gingras said a lot has been accomplished in the last several weeks. The Marketing Committee, the Quinnipiac University Student Marketing Team (SMT) with Professor Tomczyk, are working hard to finalize this marketing campaign. Again, the Committee remarked on what a great group these college students are. Mayor Dickinson has been briefed on the campaign and gave his approval. Gary Fappiano asked, once the campaign gets started, if the other EDC Committees will be able to use some of the key elements developed by the SMT; Mark said it would be a good idea, given that the campaign is designed to be run for several years.

- **Next meeting:** January 20 at 8 a.m.

- **P&Z Liaison**

- **Update on committee activities** – Jim Wolfe reported that the Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) met in December and began discussions about expanding the uses in the IX and I5 Zones, which the EDC has been in favor of for many years.

***Rob Fritz joined the meeting at approximately 6:44 p.m.**

Jim read Section 4.10 A. of the Zoning Regulations for the I-5 Zone which says:

“Purpose - To utilize the key location of lands with accessibility to Route I-91 while protecting the Town's Public Water Supply Watershed by requiring high standards for development.” He feels this can be done if the project is done right. He hopes that the PZC will keep an open mind. There has to be a way to allow businesses to grow while protecting the watershed.

When asked if other Committee members had further comments, Hank Baum said, at the December Town Council meeting, the tax incentive for the IHZ was renewed, after much discussion. Hank complimented Tim Ryan, saying he did a great job explaining the tax incentive program and fielding questions. Also approved at the December Council meeting was the plan to create Town parking on the site of the former Brothers Restaurant; this will be important for the future of TOD. Hank agreed with Jim about the need to change the regulations in the IX and I5 zones but said there is still a lot of issues with the watershed.

80 Joe Mirra said these two zones are prime locations for development in our Town; the
81 EDC has been trying to work to add uses for many years while making sure we are
82 mindful of the watershed.

83 Tim Ryan said this is a very sensitive subject and protecting the watershed is very
84 important. The EDC and staff feel that respectful development can happen within a
85 watershed protection district. Tim pointed out that we do currently have warehousing,
86 electrical assembling facilities, four clean manufacturers, two transportation businesses,
87 and a distribution and repair facility already functioning responsibly within the district. All
88 we're saying is that the engineering advances are notable and we have even better
89 protections in place now than when those businesses were allowed. As an example of
90 the current stringent protections in place, the former Bristol-Myers Squibb building,
91 including its power plant, was successfully removed with no impact on the watershed
92 protection district Why? Because Wetlands insisted on triple redundancies in terms of
93 the protections they wanted in that watershed protection district. The EDC is agreeing
94 that the proper precautions need to be in place. The answer is not to disallow
95 development opportunities but to allow us to present them to the PZC so that they can
96 effectively make a sound decision as to whether a particular use can be allowed. A word
97 of caution, regarding manufacturing—there are many types of manufacturers, some that
98 we would not want in the watershed protection district. Radiall, for example, is an
99 electronics assembly company; its NAICS code says they are a manufacturer. They are
100 not in a watershed protection district but if they were, they would be completely harmless
101 to the watershed protection district. Another example is warehousing – it depends on
102 what you're storing. Many of the warehouses are evolving into e-commerce, which is a
103 fantastic use and with the proper precautions could go anywhere. Many e-commerce
104 users rely heavily on technology, which translates into tax revenue in terms of personal
105 property. They're don't necessarily generate the jobs/sq. foot (as BMS did) but Utilities
106 would be very pleased. It's a very active discussion that will continue, probably for some
107 time.

108 Joe Mirra said that this area was developed 25-30 years ago and there are ways to
109 keep the watershed safe and allow development.

110 Jim Wolfe said this will be discussed at the next PZC meeting on January 11. He is
111 unable to attend and asked if any other PZL Committee members will participate; Joe
112 Mirra said they would.

113 ➤ **Next meeting:** No meeting set.

114

115 • **Retention/Incentives**

- 116 ➤ **Report on committee activities** – Gary Fappiano said the Committee hopes to meet
117 before the end of January. He said he appreciated the previous mention of renewal of
118 the tax incentive program for the IHZ. Also, the From the Desk of Joe column in
119 *Wallingford Magazine* about the parking lot was a good way to show what it takes to
120 make a project like this happen. Gary also complimented Rob Fritz on the good job he
121 did for the Arts Council, also in that same issue.
- 122 ➤ **Next meeting:** Tentatively set for the end of January.

123

124 **The EDC agreed that Item 7 (Staff report) be heard before Item 6 (Chair's remarks).**

125

126 **7. Staff report/regional matters – December report** – Tim reviewed his staff report (*copy attached*) and
127 the following items were noted:

- 128 • The application by Proton International for the proposed Proton Beam Therapy Center on
129 Northrop Road is on the agenda for the IWWC meeting on Jan. 6 and the PZC agenda for Jan.
130 11. It is hoped that the application will be approved by both Commissions.
- 131 • The application for an Amazon warehouse at 5 Research Parkway is not on the IWWC January
132 6 agenda; the Environmental Planner said discussions with the applicant are ongoing.
- 133 • A meeting was held with Town officials and *CTrail* to discuss what the Town feels is excessive
134 noise from train horns as the trains travel through Town. Railroad officials, after conducting
135 tests, agreed that the train horn noise is above acceptable levels and steps will be taken to
136 reduce the volume. Also discussed at this meeting was the request that the two crossings by
137 the historic railroad station (Quinnipiac Street and Hall Avenue) be considered as one crossing
138 due to their proximity. This change would reduce the number of horns and, therefore, noise.
139 Tim feels the railroad officials are taking the Town's concerns seriously.

140 Tim also mentioned that reutilizing the historic railroad station is now being discussed

- 141 • Chair Mirra, Vice Chair Gingras and EDC staff met with Senator-Elect Paul Cicarella to discuss
142 economic development issues and opportunities.
- 143 • The posting for the Program Planning/EDC secretary position has closed. After HR vets the
144 applications, qualified applications will be forwarded to the Mayor's Office and Economic
145 Development Office so the interview process can begin.

146

147 **6. Chair's remarks** –

- 148 • Joe Mirra and the Commission thanked the secretary for all she has done for the EDC over the
149 years.


- 150 • He also said that the articles in the *Wallingford Magazine*, have been well received. Joe would
- 151 like to have the next issue focus on the EDC – who we are and what we do.
- 152 • Joe wondered how the EDC can help the businesses in Town that are struggling to stay open
- 153 and requested that the Commissioners contact him with any suggestions.
- 154 • The programs run by HUBCAP, before the pandemic, resulted in about 75% of the participants
- 155 finding jobs, most with almost twice their former salaries. HUBCAP needs sponsorships to
- 156 continue their work.
- 157 • Joe thanked the Commissioners for all the work they've done over this past difficult year.

158
159 **9. Other community business** – There were no items mentioned.

160
161 **There being no further business, Rosemarie Preneta made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:22**

162 **p.m.; Mark Gingras seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.**

163
164 Sincerely,

165 

166 Lynn M. Wolff, Secretary

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Staff Report
December 2020 Activities
Presented at January 2021 EDC meeting

Local Initiatives

- The EDC began its quest to expand uses in the I-5 Zone and reduce the open space requirements in both the IX and I-5 Zones back in 2016. This initiative has been the subject of several PZC workshops and most recently was discussed at length at a public hearing as a PZC agenda item. The PZC voted to continue the public hearing at their next meeting scheduled for 1/11/21.
- Proton International, the applicant for the Proton Beam Therapy Center being planned for the undeveloped 12 acre site on Northrop Road, is on the IWWC and PZC agendas for January 6th and 11th respectively. Early indications are that the applicant has been extremely well prepared and approvals are anticipated.
- IWWC application is pending for Montante Construction for a 219,000 sf amazon warehouse at 5 Research Parkway, former BMS site. As of this writing, this project is not on the January IWWC agenda. According to our environmental planner, discussions with the applicant are ongoing.
- Regional economic developers met virtually with the Executive Director of the CT Restaurant Association to keep updated on the dismal status of the restaurant industry and more importantly to make sure we were informed about any and all efforts/opportunities to help these businesses stay afloat. A similar meeting was held with the Executive Director of the CT Retail Merchants Association.

Creating Opportunities

- Staff and members of the EDC's P&Z Liaison Committee attended the 12/8 Town Council meeting to ask for support via financial allocation for the improvements on the former Brother's site and received approvals. This to-be-improved parking lot will provide ample parking to support other potential development projects, most notable, the reuse of the historic train station
- Chair Mirra, Vice Chair Gingras, and staff met with Senator Elect Paul Cicarella to discuss issues that are important to us to forward our economic development agendas.
- The potential future uses of our historic railroad station have been the subject of much discussion. Per the commission's direction, staff continues to foster the requisite discussions to pursue the vision of converting the railroad station into a more robust center for economic activity.
- The Mayor organized a virtual meeting with staff, engineering, public works, corporation council and representatives from CT Rail to discuss what we feel is excessive noise emanating from train horns as they travel through Wallingford. The meeting was fruitful as CT Rail representatives were respectful of the noise issues and agreed to conduct tests to determine decibel levels while also researching other possible solutions to reduce train horn noise while protecting public safety. We will meet again once the test are done...sometime in mid-January.
- The PZC passed a zoning text amendment at their December meeting that changes the calculation used to determine required parking for restaurants from total facility square footage to dining area only resulting in fewer required parking spaces. This change is one of several items being discussed that would further the objective of allowing the continuation of outdoor dining once the Governor's COVID19 executive order expires.
- The Town Council unanimously approved a three year extension of our Real Property Tax Incentive for the Incentive Housing Zone.

Marketing

- Chair Mirra, Vice Chair Gingras, and staff met with the Mayor to introduce the planned digital/social media marketing campaigns. The initiative was well received and received his support. We're planning to have a soft launch of our strategic digital marketing program by mid-January

Trade Shows

- None scheduled

Update on Town Center

- WCI Executive Director reports that 3 Town Center merchants have received \$5,000 from the CT Cares Grant offered by DECD and several more applications are in the approval pipeline.
- The Pop-up Holiday Store in HUBCAP was a success. Venders were happy and it brought foot traffic to lower downtown. An outdoor spring craft show is being considered.
- Jake's Pub, the business, has been sold but the building is still on the market.

Miscellaneous

- The Program Planning Secretary's position posting has closed. Human Resources is evaluating all applications and will pass them to the Mayor and EDC staff to begin the interviewing process.
- Staff participated in discussions with members of Dr. Menzo's staff brainstorming how a "virtual" Credit for Life Program could be held. Credit for Life has been attended by every high school sophomore town-wide for many years and focuses on real life financial planning.

In the News

- *Ulbrich unveils new high-tech rolling mill...Company Press Release, 12/2... one of the world's most advanced rolling mills represents a significant investment in our community by Ulbrich Stainless Steels and Special Metals*
- *New storage facility planned for Blue Trail shooting range...RJ, 12/3... owners are investing \$500,000 in their facility at 316 North Branford Road. New storage buildings will replace some of the old quonset huts*
- *Fuel storage at proposed 7-Eleven raises concern about nearby brook...RJ, 12/5...proposed development at 1033 North Colony Road...next to Sonic...is being review by IWWC*
- *Owner set up food truck in front of well-known former banquet facility...RJ, 12/14...Jim Zandri will be selling hot soups from his new food truck at 1074 South Colony Road*
- *Car wash sought for storage site...RJ, 12/15...Executive Auto Group purchased 1254 South Broad Street...formerly Servpro...and plans to use the facility for auto detailing*
- *More types of businesses proposed for water supply areas...RJ, 12/16...PZC discussions about I-5 Zone expanded uses*
- *Permit revision allows car washing, detailing...RJ, 12/16... 1254 South Broad Street plan approved*
- *Next stop: Adult education or business?...RJ, 12/20...possible repurposing of the historic train station for commercial use*

New & Expanding Businesses

- No report

Results of EDC Marketing Activities

Advertising	0
Brokers/Site Consultants	3
Direct Contact	2
State/CERC/Chamber/REX	1
Trade Shows	0
Business Assistance	0
Total	6

Respectfully,

Tim Ryan