

DRAFT

Economic Development Commission Regular Virtual Meeting Minutes May 3, 2021

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

Absent:

Others Present: Tim Ryan, Economic Development Specialist
Stacey Hoppes, Secretary
Kathy Lilley, Exec. Dir., WCI

Chair Joe Mirra called the regular virtual meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 6:30 p.m. Chair Mirra explained how the EDC would conduct the virtual meeting.

1. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Chair Mirra led the EDC in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **Discussion and Possible Action on Regular Virtual Meeting Minutes dated April 5, 2021** – Jim Wolfe noted that the minutes show he was absent at the April 5 meeting, he was actually in attendance. Secretary will correct the minutes and finalize. Motion to approve was not made. Will add to agenda for next meeting to approve minutes of April 5, 2021.

3. **Review of monthly Expenditure Report** – No comments. Moved onto next item.

45 **4. Committee remarks**46 • **Marketing**

- 47 ➤ **Update on committee activities** – Mark Gingras updated the Commission on the
48 meeting of April 12.
- 49 ➤ Committee discussed the Digital Marketing Initiative presentation that they are
50 preparing for the Town Council Regular Meeting dated May 25, 2021. The
51 presentation will begin with Chairman, Joe Mirra introducing the Marketing Committee
52 Chair, Mark Gingras. Mark will then give an introduction to the presentation, and
53 introduce two (2) members of the Student Marketing Team. These two (2) students
54 will present the Digital Marketing Initiative to the Town Council. Tim Ryan will end the
55 presentation. There will be time available for Q&A.
- 56 ➤ Budget hearing with Town Council went well; the presentation was excellent.
- 57 ➤ Tim Ryan gave an update regarding the Digital Marketing Initiative. EDC stopped
58 marketing outreach during Covid breakout. As of February the market is
59 strengthening and coming back and we have the funds, so it's time to start back up.
60 Due to timing, we missed April, but we have ads running throughout May. Weekly
61 email, Linked In, and Instagram messages will continue to be sent. Tim discussed
62 that he proposed digital ads for the Fairfield County Business Journal and the
63 Hartford Business Journal that have been finalized. The FFCBJ ad is a two cube
64 block that contains "Why Wallingford" and the EDC Business Video. These active
65 model ads are in the News@Noon portion of the West Chester and Fairfield County
66 Business Journals. Tim is working with the Hartford Business Journal to create a
67 Testimonial Ad that will include testimony from Hobson & Motzer...why they came to
68 Wallingford and what their experience has been.
- 69 ➤ Anthony Bracale noted that on our Linked In blip regarding the Wallingford Plant,
70 does not have a link to our website. This will be addressed. Commissioner Bracale
71 and staff met with a high ranking executive from LinkedIn to discuss how we can
72 further benefit from the digital strategies we're building. The LinkedIn executive, with
73 national responsibilities lives in Wallingford
- 74 ➤ **Next meeting:** Thursday, May 13, 2021 - 8:30 am

75 • **P&Z Liaison**

- 76 ➤ **Update on committee activities** – Chair Jim Wolfe discussed that there are two (2)
77 out of the 4 items on the Planning and Zoning Commission Agenda that might be of
78 interest to the EDC. The first one is a Special Permit for 5 Research Parkway/Bristol
79 Meyers. The second is a Special Permit for 1070 N. Farms Rd and 2 Northrop Rd.
80 Jim asked for Tim's thoughts on these two items. Tim suggested that the Committee

81 attempt to attend the PZC meeting, on May 10, so that more information is collected
82 prior to having a discussion.

83 ➤ Joe Mirra asked if the EDC should attend the PZC meeting. Yes, if possible to get a
84 feel for what PZC is looking for from the applicants. Secretary will send the link to the
85 PZC meeting on Monday, May 10, 2021 at 7:00 pm to the EDC as a reminder to
86 attend.

87 ➤ **Next meeting:** Monday, May 17, 2021 – 8:30 am

88 • **Retention/Incentives**

89 ➤ **Report on committee activities** – Chair Gary Fappiano updated that they are
90 working on trying to get businesses in the Downtown to take advantage of the Real
91 Property Tax Incentive Program for the Incentive Housing Zone. Discussed using our
92 marketing tools to inform businesses of our Incentive Programs. They are moving
93 forward with the American Rescue Package, this may involve all EDC Committees.
94 Talked about possibly taking photos of the new Amazon Building located at 425 South
95 Cherry St., with the Solar Panels along Pent Road and the new efficient
96 Recycle/Disposal Center. This may be a great way to show the towns progress when
97 promoting the Towns Incentive Programs.

98 ➤ Tim Ryan gave a digital channel update. The Incentive Housing Zone advertisement
99 has been sent through email, Instagram and Linked In. Continue to work with all
100 committees for ideas on weekly marketing messages.

101 ➤ Tim Ryan gave an update on multiple properties: 50 South Main Street is in the
102 process of renovations. DiNitale properties on Center St. and Wallace Ave. are in
103 progress and will eventually become 2 town houses and a residential 2nd floor above
104 the Center Street buildings.

105 ➤ CTrail representatives and Town officials met on the former Brothers' property on 4/7
106 to review progress revolving around the excessive noise created by the 17 daily trains
107 that pass through our Town Center. New "sound directing" horns have been installed
108 at the Quinnipiac St and Hall Ave crossings. By directing the mounted horns
109 downward towards vehicles waiting at the crossings, the sound will no longer come
110 from the train's engine and thus not be dispersed into the open air. This strategy
111 should result in a less noise saturation while maintain safety protocols. Hank and
112 Rosemarie noted that they have noticed a significant difference already.

113 ➤ Joe Mirra asked the Secretary to update the order of the items on the agenda; to list
114 the Chair report before the Staff report going forward. Secretary will update going
115 forward.

116 ➤ **Next meeting:** None scheduled

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118 **5. Staff report/regional matters – April report** – Tim reviewed this staff report (*copy attached*) and
119 the following items were noted:

- 120 ➤ Tim Ryan reported that there has been a lot of market activity since February. The Wells
121 Fargo building on North Main Street has at least three (3) interested buyers, but the property
122 has not been listed yet. In anticipation of a new Police Station being built at 100 Barnes
123 Road, there has been a broad spectrum of conversation around the present stations reuse.
124 He is encouraged by the level of interest in the old train station. Reuse and
125 Commercialization conversations have all been positive. There has been no improvement in
126 Office Space Vacancy Rates, but we are not alone. Fresh Bev has leased 46K sq. ft. at 3
127 Sterling Drive. The prospective buyer of 805 North Colony Rd (formerly Sky Zone) met with
128 staff and the Town Planner to discuss their business vision. Conversations are confidential at
129 this time.
- 130 ➤ The Mayor held a meeting with staff, the acting Town Planner and the present and former
131 Town Engineers to discuss next steps regarding expanded uses in the I-5 Zone. The issue,
132 as we know, is the potential of further development in the Watershed Protection Area. The
133 Town Engineer agreed to research how other communities within CT and beyond are
134 addressing similar development opportunities. Another meeting is anticipated in early May
- 135 ➤ The property owner of 50 South Main St has begun renovation of the building. In addition, the
136 distressed buildings on Wallace Ave (behind the package store) are scheduled to be raised
137 and two new residential townhouses will be built in that footprint
- 138 ➤ Update on Town Center: The strip plaza at 23 South Colony St will be fully leased by early
139 summer. Natalie's Pizza will be leasing the newly renovated space that was formerly Stella's
140 Pizza and will include outdoor patio dining. Azteca Ice Cream will be a neighbor to the
141 Azrteca Bakery. A new hair salon will fill the last of the vacant space in the plaza. The new
142 plaza owner Carl Davia is investing \$500,000 into the plaza. 19 volunteers came together,
143 thanks to the Executive Director of WCI, to clean up the Town Center public parking lots.
144 WCI is planning a Children's Sidewalk Chalk Drawing Contest May 22nd & 23rd. WCI has
145 created a downtown bingo game in efforts to bring more people to our Town Center. The
146 game begins 5/10
- 147 ➤ Kevin Pagini is Wallingford's new Town Planner. The EDC extends our thanks to acting Town
148 Planner, Tom Talbot, for his stewardship and assistance while filling that critical role
- 149 ➤ The CT Secretary of State's office, in conjunction with the CT Data Collaborative, has created
150 the means for communities to identify new business starts. Staff is in the process of
151 evaluating the data for use in determining business activity levels. Discussion on revamping
152 of process and reporting of new business listings to include Secretary of the State New

153 Business List by month. Also, EDC Business Activity List will continue using Connects and
154 Disconnects Lists. Jim Wolfe noted that sometimes investors buy out multiple properties and
155 combine them into one LLC, so the lists may not be accurate. Tim Ryan stated that the
156 resources are not perfect, but that the common denominator is that there is movement. We
157 will also use these lists to continue reaching out to new businesses with “welcome calls”

158 **6. Chair’s remarks** – Joe Mirra introduced Ray Andrewsen, the new President of the Quinipiac
159 Chamber of Commerce. Ray stated that he is ready to go to work on behalf of the Town and
160 Community. Wallingford has a dynamic variety of resources, it’s not just about electric and facilities,
161 it’s about variety.

162 ➤ The HUBCAP is working on revitalizing the Uptown and Downtown Center areas. New programs
163 starting in July that are new and next level. More information to come in the next few weeks
164 regarding the downtown area and some new members.

165 **7. Other community business** – Jim Wolfe discussed the parking lot of the West Side YMCA on North
166 Turnpike Road. His idea is to turn the portion abutting the exit ramp to the Merrit Parkway into a
167 commuter lot. There is none in the area for that portion of the parkway and it could be an ideal use of
168 the space since the YMCA does not use it at this time. Kathy Lilley stated that at one time the YMCA
169 was approached to use the space for a cell tower, but to no avail. Tim Ryan stated that cell towers
170 are changing due to the expansion of 5G. 5G signals will be carried via boxes on telephone poles
171 that would be a point to point contact.

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173 **There being no further business, Jim Wolfe made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m.;**

174 **Mark Gingras seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.**

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Sincerely,

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Stacey Hoppes, Secretary

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