



Town of Wallingford
Economic Development Commission
45 South Main Street, Room 311
Wallingford, CT 06492

Approved by EDC
June 21, 2021

Economic Development Commission
Regular Virtual Meeting Minutes
June 7, 2021

Present:

Joe Mirra, Chair
Hank Baum, Commissioner
Patricia Cymbala, Commissioner
Gary Fappiano, Commissioner
Mark Gingras, Vice-Chair
Rosemarie Preneta, Commissioner
Jim Wolfe, Commissioner

Absent:

Anthony Bracale, Alternate
Rob Fritz, Alternate

Others Present:

Tim Ryan, Economic Development Specialist
Stacey Hoppes, EDC Secretary
Kathy Lilley, Exec. Dir., WCI
Ginny Kozlowski, CEO - REX Development
Barbara Malmberg, Project Manager - REX Development
Ray Andrewsen, President – Quin. Chamber of Commerce
Andrew & Jenny Mays, Tankwood Rd. Resident
Dr. Ed Hohmann
Thomas Ringrose, Tankwood Rd. Resident
Caller 1 - would not identify themselves

Chair Joe Mirra called the regular virtual meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 6:31 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. **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Presentation by REX Development** – Ginny Kozlowski, CEO of REX and Barbara Malmberg, Project Manager of REX presented their power point presentation on Economic Development Strategy for the REX Development territories covering everywhere from Milford to Meriden to Madison. Their main focus right now is on resilience and rebuilding the workforce. Jim Wolfe asked if funding for Brownfields is in this coming year's budget. Ginny will forward the budget to Ryan. There was a discussion regarding the highest and best uses for sites given today's market. Ginny stated that Wallingford qualifies for distressed city funding because REX qualifies as a regional partner. During the Q&A period Barbara asked what is most important to Wallingford's Economic Development efforts. Ryan stated that Wallingford's top issues are employment (most businesses have job openings) and office space vacancies. There was a brief conversation regarding why so many people opt not to go back to work. Main reasons being receipt of unemployment benefits, childcare, skill gaps, and transportation. There was also a brief conversation regarding cyber security and what REX is doing to help protect municipalities and enhance Regional Services Grants for Municipal Systems Protection. Ryan mentioned that Wallingford is receiving \$4.3 million through the American Rescue Plan Act. It was discussed that it would be beneficial to have continuity between communities and how they distribute the funds. Ginny said there is a plan to have all 15 REX region towns come together to talk about how to maximize economic opportunities with a focus towards getting the younger population to come into the area and stay.

3. **Discussion and Possible Action on Regular Virtual Meeting Minutes dated May 3, 2021** – Jim Wolfe made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented. Mark Gingras seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.
4. **Review of monthly Expenditure Report** – Jim Wolfe asked what happens to the left over funds in the budget. Tim Ryan updated that we still have digital initiatives that are currently running that will be paid prior to Fiscal Year end and the final payment to the QU SMT was just processed. Covid put a hold on our marketing earlier in the fiscal year, so there will be a surplus.
5. **Discussion on proposed Data Centers** – Joe Mirra started the discussion by opening the item to public Q&A. Thomas Ringrose asked about the extent of the Data Center tax incentives. At this time, Tim Ryan asked to give an introduction and background of the project. Tim reviewed the project specifics that are known at this time and discussed the Municipal Host Agreement that is currently under negotiations. Andrew and Jenny Mays, of Tankwood Road, have concerns about the noise that would be created by the facility, the position of the proposed buildings, and the traffic coming in and out of the property. Thomas Ringrose brought up that instead of using diesel generators as a back-up power source, they could run off natural gas to lower the noise level. Tim answered that diesel generation is the most controllable back-up power source, and the only source the Data Center developers will consider. This project is in the early stages and the town is taking each step with due diligence. Main concerns are the noise level and the number of proposed buildings. **Jim Wolfe made a motion stating: The EDC acknowledges the benefit of data center development and supports the continuance of the due diligence process and negotiations of a Municipal Host Agreement by Town leadership. The motion was seconded by Mark Gingras. By unanimous vote, the motion was approved.**
6. **Discussion on Old Railroad Station** – The commission had a discussion about the building including; what types of businesses would be a good fit, relocating Adult Education, the feasibility of repurposing the building, and what the community is looking for. The Commission feels that at this time it would be a good idea to do a feasibility and structural study. The Mayor has requested that EDC work with the Engineering Department to establish parameters of a feasibility study and prepare an RFP for said study. Mark Gingras stated that the Marketing Committee is willing to create a draft proposal of what the feasibility study should cover, and bring it to the EDC for review and discussion of how to move forward. The Marketing Committee will add it to their agenda for the next meeting.
7. **Committee remarks**
 - **Marketing**
 - **Update on committee activities** – Mark Gingras updated the Commission on the meeting of May 13.
 - The Committee ended the QU SMT initiative for this year with a presentation by the SMT to the Town Council, which was very well received. Now the Committee is discussing how to move forward. What is the next step? Joe Mirra suggested sending a correspondence to the SMT to get ideas from them; what would their next step be if it was their corporation. Looking forward to possibly working with new students, only one of the current students will be returning next year, all others are graduating.
 - Tim Ryan reported that the P/T Digital Marketing Specialist position is being advertised through our digital channels and the Record Journal. This individual will focus on our marketing direction and guide us with the next SMT team. Joe Mirra suggested bringing Mark Gingras into the interview process. Hank asked if this position will continue the initiatives that the SMT worked on. Tim stated that the Economic Development Office, as a 3 person team, will continue with digital initiatives.
 - **Next meeting:** None scheduled

- **P&Z Liaison**
 - **Update on committee activities** – Jim Wolfe reported that the PZC is still reviewing the application for 5 Research Parkway and it will be discussed at the next meeting on June 14, 2021 at 7:00pm.
 - **Next meeting:** None scheduled
 - **Retention/Incentives**
 - **Report on committee activities** – Chair Gary Fappiano stated that there was no meeting in May. No updates at this time.
 - **Next meeting:** Tentative date: June 24, 2021 Time: TBD
8. **Staff report/regional matters – April report** – Tim reviewed this staff report (*copy attached*) and the following items were noted:
- Staff is a member of the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce Legislative Committee where the ongoing workforce issues were discussed. Employers throughout Town...and throughout the country... are having problems filling open positions. The mantra of “Getting our Economy Started Again” is being negatively impacted by current unemployment compensation practices from both the State and the Federal Government. Conversations regarding the discontinuation of the unemployment stipend are falling on deaf ears.
 - As mentioned at last month’s meeting, the CT Secretary of State’s office, in conjunction with the CT Data Collaborative, has created the means for communities to identify new business starts/registrations. April and May results show 61 new LLC’s registered in Town. There has been a significant shift from traditional bricks and mortar to homebased businesses.
 - Tim reported that the new Town Planner, Kevin Pagini, is ready, willing and able to work with the Economic Development Department, including site visits. Interim Planner, Tom Talbot is continuing to stay on staff due to the high volume of projects.
- **Chair’s remarks** – The HUBCAP Small Business program has created a new data base of all high school students who are not pursuing college. This list is for businesses looking to hire credible high school seniors. Companies will be able to use this list to get contacts and as a Help Wanted Service through the HubCap. They are also updating their Incubator that shows Wallingford students and where they are now. Joe asked that members of the EDC pass along this new information. Tim Ryan informed Joe that the HubCap’s Small Business Launch Promotional Flyer is in process to be sent out on Instagram.
9. **Other community business** – Jim Wolfe stated that he wanted to make everyone aware of the load that Tim Ryan takes on. His calls have doubled and he covers a lot of ground in his 30 hour work week. Joe agreed. Tim appreciates the support.
- Mark Gingras noted that it was nice to see the public attending the meeting tonight, residents are the biggest asset to promote the town and hope public attendance continues.
 - **Summer Recess** – EDC next meeting is not until Monday, August 30, 2021.

There being no further business, Mark Gingras made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m.; Patricia Cymbala seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Sincerely,



Stacey Hoppes, Secretary