

DRAFT

**Economic Development Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
June 21, 2021**

Present:

**Joe Mirra, Chair
Hank Baum, Commissioner
Gary Fappiano, Commissioner
Mark Gingras, Vice-Chair
Jim Wolfe, Commissioner
Anthony Bracale, Alternate
Rob Fritz, Alternate**

Absent:

**Rosemarie Preneta, Commissioner
Patricia Cymbala, Commissioner**

Others Present:

**Tim Ryan, Economic Development Specialist
Stacey Hoppes, EDC Secretary
Andrew & Jenny Mays, Tankwood Rd. Resident
Ed Hohmann, Resident**

Chair Joe Mirra called a special meeting of the Economic Development Commission to discuss a single agenda item. The Commission does not meet in July, so a special meeting was necessary due to the time sensitivity of the subject. Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

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 June 7, 2021** – Jim Wolfe made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented. Anthony Bracale seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.
3. **Discussion and Possible Action on proposed Data Centers** – Chair Mirra asked Tim Ryan to introduce the Data Center project to the Commission. Ryan gave an overview of the project stating details and giving a timeline of the project. The project started in August 2019 with confidential discussions on site selection, as is very customary with many projects. The project has been open to public discussion since earlier this year.
 - Ryan addressed the question, Why Data Centers...Wallingford has been trying to acquire Data Centers unsuccessfully for some time now. Costs to have a Data Center in Connecticut are recognized by the industry as being too high. Recent Connecticut state legislation exempted large Data Centers (\$200MM minimum investment) as tax exempt. In lieu of taxes, each town can have a Qualified Data Center Municipal Host Fee Agreement.
 - Ryan then addressed the question, Why Wallingford...Currently there are high-speed data lines running down the I-91 corridor connecting Boston to New York. Wallingford is a prime location for Data Centers to access and build out that pathway. Ryan stated that the POCD encourages modernizing our development profiles. Data Center development is in lock-step with the purpose statements of the I-5 and IX Zones recommendations.

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- Attendees gathered around a map of the privately owned properties that are currently being assembled by Gotspace, LLC. The map is highlighted by property, with acreage and owner identification. Multiple sites are under contract with several private property owners, totaling 500+ acres. Most of the discussion was regarding the property being assembled in Barnes Industrial Park North, bordered by Tankwood Road and North Farms Road.
 - Main concerns of the EDC and the public are sound and traffic patterns. Ryan stated that through ongoing negotiations lead by the towns Law Department, the building setbacks increased from 100 ft. to 350 ft. Ryan stated that traffic patterns are exclusive to the Industrial Park. There will be no access to the project via Tankwood Road or North Farms Road. Ryan shared that sound mitigation strategies recommended by the sound consultant hired by the town are now are part of the agreement. These strategies are the toughest sound requirements in the country according to the developer. The Agreement is on the agenda for the Town Council meeting on June 22, 2021.
 - When asked if this was a good financial deal for Wallingford, Ryan responded by saying, although these hyper-scale Data Centers are potentially tax exempt the revenue received from the Host Agreement is a multiple of what we are receiving in our industrial parks in taxes per acre. For example, the Barnes Industrial Parks currently yield a total of \$8,900/acre in Real Estate and Personal Property taxes. Data Center Development as proposed will yield, via the Host Agreement \$23,400/acre.
 - **The Commission stated that they are unanimously in support of the Data Center Development Project, and in lieu of a motion the EDC requested that Staff, Ryan write a letter to the Town Council. (Attached)**

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4. **Other community business** – Joe Mirra informed the Commission that Hank Baum will now be the Chair of the Planning & Zoning Liaison Committee.
- Jim Wolfe informed Mark Gingras about the plot of town owned land on Grieb Rd. that has a water pumping station with electricity that abuts I-91 that we could possibly look into for adding power to the EDC billboard.

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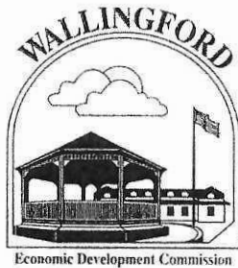
There being no further business, Jim Wolfe made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 p.m.; Anthony Bracale seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

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Sincerely,

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Stacey Hoppes, Secretary



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

June 22, 2021

Wallingford Town Council
45 South Main Street
Wallingford, CT 06492

Economic Development Commission's Data Center Position

Attention: Vincent Cervoni, Chair

Dear Council Members,

On Monday 6/21/21 your Economic Development Commission voted unanimously to support the **Qualified Data Center Host Municipality Fee Agreement** with the following caveats:

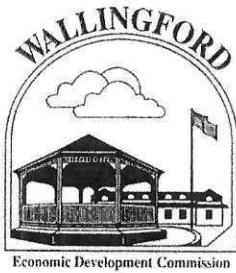
- Locations be limited to those stated in the Mayor's letter to the Council dated 6/18/21
- Require that on-site diesel generators meet or exceed EPA standards

The EDC supports a measured approach towards the development of Data Centers in select locations of the Industrial Expansion Zone (IX) and Interchange District (I-5). Such development supports the "purpose" for each of these zones as stated in the Town's zoning regulations. Furthermore, Data Center development is supported by our POCD, Chapter 2, page 14 is entitled; *Grow Wallingford's Economic Base and Attract Diverse Businesses*. This chapter goes on to state that *Wallingford may need to adjust its economic development strategy and industrial land use regulations to keep pace with changing needs in the business community*. This data center opportunity is in lock-step with these stated strategic objectives.

EDC staff engaged in a collective effort championed by our Law Department and Mayor's office regarding the formulation of the host agreement and its many iterations. Great care has been taken in advancing the interests of our entire community while protecting the quality of life issues this development project may present. We're confident that the potential visual obstacles presented by this development to residential abutters have been mitigated by required set-backs and the anticipated use of vegetative buffers. Our sole concern revolves around the sound generated by this use category and as such, support the strict sound requirements outlined in the agreement.

Economic Impact:

The sustainable economic benefits reside in the Town's annual revenue from the Qualified Data Center Host Municipality Fee Agreement. It has been asked whether this is a good financial deal for our Town. Our research, performed in conjunction with the Tax Assessor, shows that the agreement will generate at least double the revenue per acre that the Town currently receives from the operation of the Barnes Industrial Parks. In addition, there will be intermittent economic benefit from the many construction jobs which will benefit the hospitality sector as each data center is estimated to take upwards of 18 months to build.



Town of Wallingford
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The developer has estimated 85 jobs per 32 megawatt facility (spread over three shifts, seven days a week), which equates to a low number of jobs per square foot which does not normally result in unanimous EDC support for a given project. However, the offset is the insignificant traffic impact of the proposed projects.

Closing:

The mission of the EDC is to seek and foster **"responsible development"**! Our support of the Qualified Data Center Host Municipality Fee Agreement along with the stated caveats, is the result of much discussion and deliberation. It is our collective opinion that this project presents a great Economic Development opportunity and benefits the long term interests of our community, while providing the necessary protections for abutters. And, as such, we respectfully request your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Mirra", is written in black ink.

Joseph E. Mirra, Chair

Wallingford Economic Development Commission

c: Mayor Dickinson
Law Department

ec: Town Council (via Town Clerk)
EDC