

MINUTES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MADDEN ROOM
SOUTH WINDSOR TOWN HALL

REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2019
TIME: 7:30P.M.

PRESENT: Chairperson David Marsh, Vice Chairperson Paul Burnham, Joseph Kennedy, Edwina Futtner, Alternate John Mitchell (sat for Linda Jeski), Alternate Wayne Kilburn (sat for William Jodice), and Alternate Victor Dorobantu (arr. 7:36pm and sat for Shailesh Verma)

ABSENT: Linda Jeski, William Jodice, Susan Burnham, James Murray, Louise Neary, Shailesh Verma, Shawn Jacobaccio

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Chairperson David Marsh called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.
2. **Roll Call:** The above-mentioned members were introduced.

Presentation: Greg Nanni, Prospect Enterprises – Revitalization of Geissler’s Plaza: Greg Nanni, general manager of Prospect Enterprises, introduced himself and explained that he has been in discussions with Geissler’s, located at 965 Sullivan Avenue, about extending their footprint into space currently occupied by the pharmacy and package store. It has been difficult to secure financing for retail projects, but with land available to the south, it has created the opportunity to bring in another use to the site. A multi-tenant residential complex with the rest of the parcel used for retail. The mixed-use development is being designed by project architect, Tom Arcari of QA&M Architecture. Mr. Arcari shared his conceptual drawings of the project and has already appeared before P&Z for an informal dialogue. He shared aerial views of the undeveloped property adjacent to Geissler’s where there is a housing development next door and commercial businesses across the street. There is a change in the grade along Sullivan avenue, which prevents Geissler’s from coming into view until just before approaching the site while heading north. The Geissler’s plaza would be broken into new parcels, and along the front of the site, it would be broken into 2 pad sites which would most likely become restaurants. Two additional commercial spaces would be positioned along the south side of the parking lot and that would have residential apartments above. The multi-family parcels would surround a green space, community building and pool, all located within the currently undeveloped parcel. The plan allows for walkable use of the retail spaces and the proximity of the housing improves the viability of the retail due to built-in demand. Some services that could be proposed to be located onsite include shopping, restaurants, and a 24-hour gym. The footprint of the current space taken up by Geissler’s would expand to the south and the designs include a new façade, remodel of the grocery store both inside and out, an increase in sidewalks, and a pedestrian viaduct would be created in the parking lot to allow for pedestrian traffic from the new housing development. The residential housing would be apartments, and the current configuration is for 100 units with a 50/50 split between one and two-bedroom apartments. The housing is an effort to entice young professionals and people interested in downsizing and is not intended to attract families. Mr. Arcari stated that there is a demand for rentals and Mr. Nanni stated that the project creates a synergy for the intended lifestyle oriented uses. Mr. Nanni elaborated that the commercial possibilities include a brew pub and service type businesses such as nail salon or dentist which could fulfill the daily needs of the residents. The cost of the project is not yet known. They are working with budgets and conducting an economic impact study which is currently in the preliminary stages. The service station would be a vital part of the project, along with a convenience store. Rental costs are estimated at \$1,300-1,400 for 1 bedroom and \$1,700 for 2 bedroom. The units would be walk-up with flush access on the first floor. Buildings would be 2 and 3 floors and the community building would

include room to play cards and a gym. The residential area would have some cover from the street with plantings to help it remain private. Hipped roofs would allow for the lowest visual impact and would be shared by other views of the proposed development. Mr. Arcari didn't have the total footprint but estimated that each residential building would be about 4,000 sq. ft. for a total of 30,000 sq. ft. for the residential buildings and the commercial mixed use building would be about 10,000 sq. ft. The commercial pads at the front of parcel could either be reused or rebuilt. Mr. Nanni shared that another element of the development is that it will be dog friendly, which may seem minor, but is important for dog lovers. An additional benefit of the project is being adjacent to the Donnelly preserve, and they are considering ways to connect to the existing paths, but this would require additional approvals. Chairperson Marsh David requested that the buildings all be the same size to create continuity and a more visually appealing view.

Vice Chairperson P. Burnham asked about the time table for project and Mr. Nanni explained that it is a function of obtaining the necessary approvals. They will most likely break ground in spring 2020 but would like for it to be sooner. The project would be done in one phase and Geissler's would remain open during the project. The interior of the store would be remodeled in phases and will expand into pharmacy space. The parking lot would be redone, a new roof placed on the building, and the interiors of the existing space would be remodeled. Retail units would be leased.

Commissioner Kennedy commented that the project looks great and agrees with the decision to build apartments.

Commissioner Mitchell stated that the community has been waiting for a project like this.

Commissioner Futtner shared that she believes the project is very exciting project and asked about lighting. Mr. Nanni stated that utilities would be buried under ground and lighting would be dark sky friendly where light is projected down instead of up.

3. **Public Participation:** None

4. **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from Regular Meeting on 1/23/2019:

A **motion** to the minutes of January 23, 2019 was made by Commissioner Futtner and **seconded** by Commissioner Mitchell to approve the minutes with the following corrections:

p. 1 Bill Jodice should be added as present at the meeting

p. 2 Item 6.c. the following text should be removed: "They would like to combine their 2nd location into one location."

Motion approved unanimously. Motion passed.

6. **Old Business**

(a) **Economic Development Strategy:** Chairperson Marsh announced dates for 2 upcoming meetings.

- Thursday March 7 at the Town Hall annex: Buxton Group will be doing a presentation. RSVP by March 3rd. Refreshments will be provided beginning at 5pm. Presentation begins at 6pm.

- Wednesday, March 27 at the firehouse: A community development forum to discuss economic development opportunities. The meeting will be a public meeting and was set up by Matt Galligan. The meeting will be held from 5-7pm. Due to the timing of the forum, Chairperson Marsh will not be at the EDC meeting and urges members to attend the forum. West Hartford held a similar forum and information can be viewed at www.planwesthartford.com.

A **motion** to cancel the March 27th Economic Development meeting in favor of attending the community development forum was made by Commissioner Mitchell and **seconded** by Commissioner Dorobantu and was **unanimously approved. Motion passed.**

Chairperson Marsh will ask Donna Thompson to send out the meeting information and in advance he will meet with Matt Galligan to find out the scope and intentions of the meeting.

- (b) **Economic Development Commission Brand, Identity, Administration:** None.
- (c) **Sustainable CT:** Chairperson Marsh will send out an email asking commissioners for volunteers to attend future meetings.
- (d) **South Windsor Citizen Survey:** None.
- (e) **Town Ordinance Economic Impact Analysis:** Chairperson Marsh is waiting to see what services Buxton Group can provide. He attended a January 31 meeting and requested the meeting on March 7th with the Buxton Group so that others could hear what they have to offer and to eliminate Buxton Group from having to meet with lots of groups. He is hoping the discussion will include the general costs of services. Buxton Group has tools to determine whether their services would be financially beneficial to the town.

7. **Committee Report(s)**

- (a) **Bylaw Review Committee:** Vice Chairperson P. Burnham stated that the updates were completed and that he has submitted the document to Matt Galligan, including information about the approval at the last meeting. Copies of the updated bylaws will be given to the Town Council. Vice Chairperson P. Burnham will reach out to Matt Galligan to find out the status of the review.
- (b) **Business Community Engagement (Ambassador Program) / Committee:** Vice Chairperson P. Burnham reported on the following:
 - Hannoush Jewelers' building is moving along and will include space for a real estate office and other offices on the second floor.
 - The hotel is going to open in the fall.
 - Electro Methods wants to be in by April.
 - Coca-Cola's foundation has been completed and prefab walls will be used in the construction. They want to be in by summer.
 - Aldi's expansion is almost done and will enable them to serve 120 stores.

8. **New Business:** Chairperson Marsh announced that Mayor Anwar will be replacing Tim Larson and hopes that economic opportunities will be forthcoming. A new mayor will be appointed, and a new liaison will also be appointed.

9. **Communications and Remarks**

- (a) **Report from David Marsh, Chairperson:** None

Commissioner Mitchell commented that there is a lack of consistency in the way that incentives or abatements are levied/applied and that they should be consistent. In the past, abatements weren't given to retail establishments, and they were used to attract businesses to town or to expand. Some have been given to businesses that would have come here anyway. Vice Chairperson P. Burnham commented that the daycare being built is part of a national company. Matt Galligan plans to reach out to them to see if they want an abatement. The daycare will be in the area of Pleasant Valley Road and Ellington Road. Commissioner Mitchell would like the town to think about the consistency of abatement policies so that it couldn't be challenged and to think about the community. Over the years, he has never seen any kind of leveling, holding or decrease of taxes after businesses are brought to town and wonders what would happen if State obligations are shifted to the town. A shift would cause the town to have an unattractive tax burden. Commissioner Kennedy stated that there is a move for the regionalization of board of educations. Commissioner Mitchell commented that towns don't like to lose home rule although there are some shared services such as emergency services that can benefit the communities. Commissioner Mitchell believes Chairperson Marsh is doing a great job. Chairperson Marsh hasn't brought this perspective on tax abatements to Matt Galligan. Chairperson Marsh has been conservative in his discussions but believes the policies should be revisited since the town seems to be always offering money but not asking for anything in return, such as adding solar panels on the roof or planting trees. Commissioner Mitchell replied that sometimes the economy doesn't allow for success bringing in economic development to town and agrees that there is a need to draw in young professionals. Chairperson Marsh asked Commissioner Mitchell to put his observations into writing in the frame of a letter to be brought to Matt Galligan or the Town Council encouraging them to revisit the abatement process. Vice Chairperson P. Burnham believes it might be a good thing to bring up at the meeting on March 27th since there might have a larger audience. Commissioner Marsh agrees but wouldn't rely on the output of a meeting like this for something so narrow since the intent of the meeting is an idea forum. A review of the tax abatement policies will be a multi-commission activity because exceptions are given in many ways by different commissions.

10. General Discussion

Next Meeting is scheduled for March 27, 2019 at 7:30 p.m. in the Madden Room. Chairperson Marsh reminded commissioners that the next meeting is now cancelled, and members are encouraged to attend the economic development forum instead. The forum is from 5-7pm and details are to follow.

11. Adjournment

A **motion** to adjourn at 8:57pm was made by Commissioner Mitchell and **seconded** by Commissioner Futtner and was *unanimously approved. Motion passed.*

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Potter
Clerk

Approved: April 24, 2019