

MINUTES

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MADDEN ROOM
SOUTH WINDSOR TOWN HALL**

**REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2020
TIME: 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Susan Burnham, Linda Jeski, Joseph Kennedy, Chairperson P. Burnham, Edwina Futtner, Victor Dorobantu, William Jodice, Vice Chairperson David Marsh, Scott Kelley, James Murray, and Alternate Mindy Lewis (sat for Louise Neary)

ABSENT: Louise Neary, Alternates Wayne Kilburn and Shailesh Verma

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Andrew Paterna and Assistant Town Manager Scott Roberts

- 1. Call Meeting to Order:** Chairperson P. Burnham called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.
- 2. Roll Call:** The above-mentioned members were introduced.
- 3. Public Participation:** Daniel Rosow, Real Estate Advisory Group LLC - presentation regarding potential new tenant at 1239 & 1249 John Fitch Blvd: Daniel Rosow introduced himself and then gave an overview of the project. He recently redeveloped a property in Manchester for a martial arts school and basketball skills. The current project site is intended to house MB Tractor and in the front section of the parcel part of the parking lot will be reverted to green space. Some work will be done in the rear of the property to minimize storm impact. The two lots will be merged into one lot. This will be the 9th location for MB Tractor but the first in CT and they are excited about the location. They will keep a certain amount of equipment on site which will be sold to small contractors and homeowners. The showroom will have smaller equipment such as snow blowers, weed whackers, and a parts counter. MB Tractor, a Kubota dealer, will primarily use the northern building for operations and the southern building will be for storage. Chairperson P. Burnham asked if changes will be made to the northern building to make it look more like a showroom and Mr. Rosow replied that the building currently has offices inside and there will be changes made to include the showroom. The front elevation will most likely remain the same and product and equipment will be brought in from the back. In the future, they may add glass to the front of the building but for now they are trying to save money on the project. They would like to open in April. Commissioner S. Burnham asked where the company's home offices are located and Mr. Rosow responded that they are in New Hampshire. He added that Kubota is a worldwide tractor brand and their products are easily recognizable because they are orange. Commissioner S. Burnham asked about the price range for the equipment and Mr. Rosow stated that the dealer will carry a variety of brands but that 80% of their business is Kubota and they are in the \$30,000-\$90,000 price range, depending on the model. Commissioner Kelley asked if the parking lot will be used for equipment display and Mr. Rosow replied that there will be limited spaces for equipment and they will be specially striped to identify them. There will be spaces for customers and employees (about 10). P&Z believes it is a great use

for the site. Commissioner Kelley asked if P&Z has restricted use of the 2nd building and Mr. Rosow stated that the plans show storage located in that building and they would have to go back to P&Z if they want to sublet. Mr. Rosow explained that the 2nd building would only be sublet for cold storage because MB Tractor needs the space for their own business.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from Regular Meeting on 11/20/2019: A **motion** to approve the minutes of November 20, 2019 was made by Commissioner Jeski and **seconded** by Commissioner Kennedy with the following corrections:

Item 8. 5th bullet should read "...resistance to the project by P&Z and that..." and "...amendment or the project itself so Commissioner Kelley will find out."

Motion approved by majority. Commissioner S. Burnham, Chairperson P. Burnham, and Alternate Lewis abstain. *Motion passed.*

Minutes from Regular Meeting on 1/22/2020: A **motion** to approve the minutes of January 22, 2020 was made by Commissioner Jeski and **seconded** by Commissioner Jodice with the following corrections:

P. 1 Item 3 should read: "...tried various menu items and found it was excellent..." and "...information that Commissioner Dorobantu had previously presented a document that he created."

P. 2 Item 3 should read: "...interested in constructing a building on Buckland Road..."

P. 2 Item 5. e. should read: "...Deputy Mayor Pendleton..." and "Commissioner P. Burnham stated that it..."

Motion approved by majority. Commissioners Kelley and Futtner abstain. *Motion passed.*

5. Old Business

(a) Economic Development Strategy: None.

(b) Economic Development Commission Brand, Identity, Administration: None.

(c) Sustainable CT: None.

(d) Town Ordinance Economic Impact Analysis: None.

(e) Follow-up Discussion on Tax Abatements: Chairperson P. Burnham stated that he looked at the minutes from April and May 2019 which reported the discussions and suggestions about the abatement and incentive program. These included comments from Commissioners Mitchell, S. Burnham, and more. Mr. Roberts explained that the town is looking to make the tax abatement process more transparent and any changes need to be approved by the Town Manager and Town Council. Mr. Roberts is reviewing different models that are in use, and although the town needs to follow CT state statutes, ideas from other states can be added. He is also exploring "View Permit Online" technology that allows online form completion for all types of forms and applications relevant to town business. The software walks applicants through the process and allows for submission and payment (if necessary) and the automated process would then alert appropriate staff that applications have been submitted. Staff would then review and proceed with internal processes. The software can also be used to provide

reports. The software would hopefully be appealing to applicants to conduct business in South Windsor. Chairperson P. Burnham would like to incorporate the commission's ideas into the draft abatement program and application process with input from the town manager. He wants to do a thorough investigation for this document. Mr. Roberts added that in changing the town website, EDC will have a large landing page, and is hoping to make navigation easier by using "Find it fast" lingo for websites. Commissioner Jeski feels that as a member of the Board of Assessment Appeals, it is critical that information on businesses coming off of abatements is shared with appropriate boards. Mr. Roberts responded that he wants to make it easy to get information and that certain members can have credentials to search their database of information. Vice Chairperson Marsh asked if historical data will be imported and Mr. Roberts replied that anything that is relevant, and can be found, will be added. Commissioner Dorobantu asked if the public will have access to the information and Mr. Roberts stated that anything covered under FOI will be available. Commissioner Dorobantu asked how the public will be informed of the new process and Mr. Roberts explained that a pamphlet will be available in town hall and it will be highlighted on the town's website. The website will provide a way to apply for an abatement and the application will provide information for approval of an abatement and what they need to bring to an EDC meeting. Commissioner Dorobantu stated that he feels that the process seems tedious and Mr. Roberts explained that whatever process is decided, it will still have to go before the town manager, attorney, town council, and the EDC before being approved. Mr. Roberts also stated that once he's finished researching the possibilities, the process could be a mirror of the paper application or have more detail, all the while keeping EDC in the loop for the online process. Implementation of an online process will help to ensure that everything is documented from beginning to end and can help lead to consistency between applications. Commissioner Jodice commented that companies can always call the town manager to see if their application would be considered before filling out forms. Commissioner Kelley feels it is important that applicants come before EDC and P&Z, that the process isn't too easy, and that everyone needs to comply and complete applications. Chairperson P. Burnham wants applicants to understand the tax incentives. Commissioner Kelley asked if there will be a list of pending applications. Commissioner Dorobantu added that he would like a way to filter out applications that wouldn't meet qualifications. Commissioner Kennedy believes the application should be simple but friendly. Commissioner Jeski gave Commissioner Kelly a brief overview of the history of tax abatements and the EDC. Chairperson P. Burnham added that the commission is trying to bring applications to the assessor, finance director and town manager before they're considered by the town council for approval. Vice Chairperson Marsh asked when is the target date for completion, what needs to be done to move it forward, and how the EDC can help. Mr. Roberts will bring a sample to the next meeting, reviewing it, and then making changes where desired. Commissioner Kelley believes that there needs to be transparency for abatements since its tax dollars and Commissioner Futtner believes it needs to be business friendly. Commissioner Murray stated that the commission should be looking out for local businesses. Commissioner Dorobantu stated that the abatement process is targeted for businesses with a lot of money. Mayor Paterna stated that abatements are governed by state statute, that every town does them, and the grand list is going up 3% this year. The tax abatement agreement protects taxpayers because they have to stay for 10 years otherwise

they have to pay back taxes from day one. Mayor Paterna added that P&Z may argue that they determine what is a good fit for the town and suggested that the EDC may need to meet more than once a month to approve/hear abatements in the future. Presentations may be made by town staff and not company representatives. He informed the commission that P&Z is looking at a moratorium on housing developments. Chairperson P. Burnham suggested that the town could buy farmland to preserve, instead of selling it for development. Commissioner Jeski stated that P&Z could make changes to slow down the rate of development. Mayor Paterna advised the commission to look at Glastonbury and West Hartford for the rate of development for housing as compared to the rest of growth. Commissioner Lewis asked if restrictions for eco-friendly development could be implemented. Mayor Paterna replied that the town could offer incentives and that he would love for a neighborhood to have a greenhouse for neighbors to grow their own vegetables. Vice Chairperson Marsh asked again about a target completion date. Mr. Roberts replied that he'll have a model to share at the March meeting and that after the model is approved, it could be live in a few weeks. Mayor Paterna stated that letters of support for change are nice but showing up in person makes a difference. Chairperson P. Burnham added that if he hadn't seen that a developer was having a preliminary discussion with P&Z, the Geissler's project text amendment may not have been approved. Vice Chairperson Marsh asked about moving the process forward outside of the regular meetings. Mr. Roberts responded that he is open to having input from a sub-committee between meetings. Vice Chairperson Marsh stated that it would be optimal to have something working before putting out on the website. Commissioner Jodice suggested that companies that initiate the application process via the website should fill out a quick form to get a response from town before filling out the complete application. Commissioner Kelley asked if the town council will have to approve the process. Mayor Paterna replied that they only asked for an online application.

A **motion** to view a presentation of the web application and the formation of a sub-committee to guide its development was made by Commissioner Jeski and **seconded** by Commissioner Murray and was *unanimously approved. Motion passed.* Vice Chairperson Marsh and Commissioners Jeski and Kelley will meet with Mr. Roberts in about 2 weeks at the annex to provide feedback.

Mr. Roberts provided updates on the following projects:

- COSTCO is continuing discussions around water pressure for fire suppression to find a solution that will work. The public hearing has been postponed and they will need to go before the design review board. The public hearing was postponed because the traffic engineer wasn't available to discuss the proposal. An underground water tank will most likely be needed.
- "Project Hammer" aka Home Depot is underway and the project is expected to be finished on time.
- 240 Ellington Road: Scannell properties has a proposed tenant and they are in discussions.
- 1 Buckland Plaza: the developer asked for a left bound in-turn heading north-bound but there's been no answer yet.
- Geissler's text amendment has been approved and the town is waiting for an application to be submitted.

- Metro Realty, by Evergreen Walk is underway. Chase Bank and an access drive has been approved and they are waiting on a site plan for ALDI.
- Subdivision with 13 lots on Maskel Road has a public hearing on March 24.
- 7 lots on Vintage Lane have been approved.
- 19 lots on Chestnut Ridge has a public hearing on March 10.
- Potential project on Rte 5 for food and gas station is in early stages of discussion.
- Still working with Evergreen Walk management on a food emporium.
- A residential development moratorium is an ongoing issue to think about.
- Has been working on cut sheets that have been put into a package that includes a card with a QR code leading people to the EDC website. He has a supply on hand at the annex and can give them to members to share.
- The filming of commission and boards during meetings is progressing. He has put together a PEG grant for professional video recording equipment which would outfit the Madden Room for filming with a live feed. A tentative list of start dates for filming has come from the town council and showed EDC being recorded in March for the first time.

6. Committee Report(s)

(a) Business Community Engagement (Ambassador Program) / Committee: None.

7. New Business: None.

8. Communications and Remarks

(a) Report from Paul Burnham, Chairperson: None.

9. General Discussion: Chairperson P. Burnham shared that Winstanley bought 2 buildings that Scannell owned, the grand list is growing by 3% - with Eversource, Evergreen Walk, and ALDI among the top three.

10. Executive Session: None

11. Adjournment

Next meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in the Madden Room.

A **motion** to adjourn at 9:08pm was made by Commissioner Jeski and **seconded** by Commissioner Murray and was *unanimously approved. Motion passed.*

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Potter
Clerk

Approved, with corrections: June 24, 2020