

Town of Trumbull
Economic and Community Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 4, 2022 - 7:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting – Zoom Videoconferencing

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Economic & Community Development Commission of the Town of Trumbull was held via videoconferencing on January 4, 2022.

Attendance

Members Present: Beryl Kaufman (Chairman)
 Karen DelVecchio (Vice Chairman)
 Evelyn Zamary (Secretary)
 Ralph Sather
 Marshall Marcus
 Shelby LeVino
 Justin Scheuble

Members Absent: Ted Chase

Also Present: Rina Bakalar – Director of Economic & Community Development
 William Chin – Director of Information Technology
 Gia Mentillo – Economic & Community Development Clerk

Chairman Kaufman called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of December 14, 2021 Minutes

A motion to approve the December 14, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes was made by Commissioner Zamary and seconded by Vice Chairman DelVecchio. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Scheuble abstained from this vote as he was not a member of the Commission on December 14, 2022 meeting.

Chairman’s Report

Chairman Kaufman introduced Justin Scheuble as a newly appointed member of the Economic and Community Development Commission (ECDC). Commissioner Scheuble stated that he has been active in Trumbull for approximately 6 years and is a current employee of People’s United Bank with a successful career in the financial services industry. He also runs a small business in Trumbull and serves as the Secretary of the town’s Business Education Initiative which assists Trumbull High School students in professional development efforts.

Chairman Kaufman shared that she recently learned of the CT Business Newsletter and noted that the link to subscribe would be distributed to the Commission for those interested.

The Chairman stated that there has been terrific, consistent coverage of Trumbull in various newspapers as of late, specifically citing the CT Post and thanking reporter Amanda Cuda for her efforts.

Chairman Kaufman stated that she has asked Commissioner Sather to spear head the Commission's goal setting initiative. Commissioner Sather noted that he prepared a draft document for goal setting which he shared with the Commission in preparation for the meeting. The Commissioner provided an overview of the document which lists proposed goals for the year, affords a description of the business ambassador roll previously curated by the Commission, and provides examples of active project's Director Bakalar feels the Commission can be supportive in. Commissioner Sather requested that members take the time to review the document, provide feedback, and potentially vote to approve the document in the February ECDC meeting.

Commissioner Marcus shared his concerns regarding the ambassador roll description, stating that he does not feel it appropriate to ask members to visit businesses in-person given the current state of the pandemic. He also noted that page two of the document should be revised to afford a more professional tone.

The Commissioner further stated that he would like to see the Commission set more precise goals which better utilize the specific skills of each member. He gave the examples of designating someone to write letters to the editor for various newspapers or possibly establishing a liaison to attend various town meetings. Lastly, Commissioner Marcus stated that he'd like the Commission to investigate the possibility of establishing a small budget for itself now that there is a member with a background in finance.

Vice Chairman DelVecchio stated that she felt the roll of ambassador should be written in a way that is applicable to non-pandemic circumstances but which allows commissioners to use discretion in choosing activities they feel comfortable engaging in at this time. The Vice Chairman voiced her appreciation for commissioners who attend various town meetings and encouraged them to continue to do so. However, she stated that if the Commission were to have a liaison, then she feels it should be Director Bakalar. Furthermore, Vice Chairman DelVecchio supported the idea of seeking out rolls for member which utilize special skill sets.

Commissioner Scheuble proposed that the Commission work to utilize technological resources to engage with Trumbull businesses so that members feel safe and businesses feel supported during particularly trying times.

Director's Report

Director Bakalar stated that she completed the 2021 "Economic and Community Development Annual Report Summary" which she has distributed to commission members.

Business Update:

The Director stated that the opening of Ecco in Long Hill is imminent, noting that the business wisely began offering gift cards throughout the holiday season.

Director Bakalar stated that the Jeff Works space will open in Hawley Lane Mall on February 1st, 2022, adding that reporter Amanda Cuda is hoping to do a piece on the new business and commending her for her efforts in representing Trumbull thus far. Ms. Bakalar noted an article recently written by the reporter in the Trumbull Times on Trumbull Café and Grill which showed support within the community for the business's recent relocation within town. The Director further stated that Ms. Cuda would be doing an article on Linquest Supply, a hardware supply business which recently relocated to Trumbull from Stratford, in addition to an article on Fryborg and its future location in Long Hill Green.

Chairman Kaufman shared concerns about the fact that the article covering Make-A-Wish failed to mention that the organization's facility in Trumbull is also a corporate headquarters. Director Bakalar stated that she would be happy to share that feedback with Ms. Cuda and encouraged the Commission to continue to provide similar feedback.

The Director stated that Guacamole Grill is planned to open in the Trumbull Westfield Mall within the first quarter of 2022, noting that they have received liquor and building permits and are currently working toward signage approvals.

Ms. Bakalar informed that there is continued business interest being shown throughout town, stating that another lease has been signed for Trumbull Center which will soon welcome a new Med Spa.

Community Development Update:

Director Bakalar stated that the housing development at the Trumbull Westfield mall is well underway, voicing appreciation for the cleanliness, containment, and respectful nature of the construction site. She stated that buildings will start to be erected soon, causing a more noticeable aesthetic change to the area which may take some getting used to.

The Director informed that there was a pre-application meeting with the Planning and Zoning Commission regarding Trumbull Center, noting that the feedback garnered from the meeting showed a need for additional information pertaining to the design of the building. Ms. Bakalar stated that there is another pre-application meeting with the Planning and Zoning Commission before their January meeting to discuss the development efforts at 7190 Main Street for which plans were adjusted based on prior feedback garnered from the Commission.

Planning Update:

Thus far, there have been three public meetings held to discuss the plans for Trumbull Center. Based on feedback garnered and subsequent conversation with staff, the Center's consulting team is working to refine the plans for the area which they hope to present to the Planning and Zoning Commission in February.

Ms. Bakalar stated that the town will receive funding through a Federal Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant to add a trail head to the commuter parking lot next to Christian Heritage Church and a trail connector to Twin Brooks.

Director Bakalar stated that Senator Moore was a tremendous help in securing \$200,000 of funding for the Trumbull Westfield Mall Planning Study for which there is also \$50,000 allotment from the Capital Budget. The Director informed that the study is intended to be of world-class caliber and is meant to assess the intricacies of the entire area from the Merritt Parkway to the Bridgeport line. The study will assess what types of industries and uses have market viability.

Furthermore, the state has passed legislation mandating that all municipalities have an affordable housing plan by 2022. In preparation for this, Land Use Planner Rob Librandi is researching plans other municipalities have adopted.

The Commission was reminded that there are three ongoing project teams currently meeting monthly to ensure consistent progress in development efforts for the Long Hill Green area, Trumbull Center, and the Route 111 traffic lights/trail.

Grant Update:

The Director worked with George Estrada and his staff to update the town's Five Year Capital Plan and have decided to add a new "Grants" section to the document. Ms. Bakalar stated a need to do so based on the fact that federal and state grant programs typically require that projects be supported by the town's Five Year Capital Plan in order to be taken into consideration for funding as it indicates a cognizance within the town that such a project is necessary. Director Bakalar further emphasized that the "Grants" section is not indicative of the town's spending but, rather, identifies initiatives to be pursued if grant funding is obtained.

Event Update:

Though there are several businesses set to open throughout town Ms. Bakalar is waiting to schedule ribbon cutting events due to the recent upticks in COVID-19 cases both locally and regionally.

The Director shared that the staffing resource vent for Trumbull businesses will now be conducted virtually in February, noting that she is working to finalize a date.

She noted a future event for small businesses on cyber security.

The Director reminded the Commission that there is a Long Term Recovery Committee meeting on January 18th at 1pm, noting that this is a particularly trying time as the town is working to simultaneously respond to new issues while recovery from existing ones. She also thanked Commissioner Marcus for his continued efforts in serving as a liaison between the two groups.

Ms. Bakalar informed that the ongoing Local Meals Program is functioning well, noting that there has been a significant increase in requests for service as of late in correspondence with the uptick in COVID-19 cases. She further stated that the Main Street Dollars program, ending on 1/31/2022, has been successful thus far, sharing intentions to calculate the economic impact the

program has had on the town based on funds garnered from both coupons and overall spending on coupon related purchases. The Director stated that both of these programs have proved worthy of replication and shared her plans to use any remaining funds from the Main Street Dollars program to conduct a similar event for another upcoming holiday.

Final Comments

Chairman Kaufman shared concern that a recent CT Post article indicated that the new “Residences on Main” development would take 5 years to complete. Director Bakalar clarified that those projections are typically based on when they expect the building to be fully leased. She stated that the construction is projected to take two-three years to complete, and she suspects that the building may be fully leased much quicker than the projection due to the fact that similar projects recently completed within town have had their leases filled very quickly.

Vice Chairman DelVecchio asked what information commissioners should be aware of when asked about staffing issues within town. Director Bakalar stated that she is working to establish a staffing resource event to directly address those concerns amongst small businesses in town, noting that state officials have also taken an interest in this issue and are working on solutions. Commissioner Marcus suggested that business owners attempt to use industry specific job websites and take into consideration the retiree job pool.

Opportunity for Community Input

None.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:32 p.m. by Commissioner Marcus and seconded by Vice Chairman DelVecchio. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gia Mentillo
ECDC Clerk

Cc: Rob Librandi, Doug Wenz