

Town of Trumbull
Economic and Community Development Commission
Revised Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2021 – 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 October 5, 2021.

Attendance

Members Present: Ralph Sather (Chairman)
 Beryl Kaufman (Vice Chairman)
 Marshall Marcus
 Karen DelVecchio
 Ted Chase
 Evelyn Zamary

Members Absent: Shelby Levino
 Eric Michel

Also Present: Rina Bakalar – Director of Economic & Community Development
 Vicki A. Tesoro – Trumbull First Selectman
 William Chin – Director of Information Technology
 Gia Mentillo – Economic & Community Development Administrative Clerk

Chairman Sather called the meeting to order at 7:04p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of September 14, 2021 Minutes

A motion to approve the September 14, 2021 Economic and Community Development Regular Meeting Minutes was made by Vice Chairman Kaufman and seconded by Commissioner Zamary. The motion carried unanimously. *(Commissioner Marcus abstained from this vote.)*

Chairman’s Report

Chairman Sather shared that Vice Chairman Kaufman recently received an award at the 2021 Ella T. Grasso Women’s Leadership Brunch, recognizing woman of substance who have contributed significantly to our society.

The Chairman reminded the commission of the Annual Business Appreciation Breakfast scheduled for October 15th at the Trumbull Marriott and thanked Commissioners DelVecchio and Zamary for having volunteered to help set up the event. He also thanked Commissioner Ted Chase for having recommended the event’s keynote speaker, Stephen Andrews, for whom a small dinner will be held the evening before the event.

Lastly, Chairman Sather asked that commissioners take time to review the Economic & Community Development Commission Charter which outlines the roles and responsibilities of

its members. He cited a passage from the charter stating that, “[commissioners] shall conduct research into business conditions,” and emphasized the importance of doing so regularly. The chairman exemplified such efforts by referring to a previous project which sought to garner insights on public perceptions of Trumbull and, in turn, improve those perceptions to effectively facilitate economic and community growth within the town. He noted that this ultimately led to the creation of the town slogan, “Trumbull Working for You,” again highlighting the commission’s responsibility to actively support Trumbull residents and businesses.

Director’s Report

Business and Community Development Update

Director Rina Bakalar reminded the Commission that it is helpful to her when they serve as ambassadors for the local business community.

Ms. Bakalar provided an update on the Business Appreciation Breakfast, asking that commissioners help circulate invitations to increase responsiveness. She noted both technical difficulties in distribution and some hesitations toward in-person events as reasons for a lowered response rate thus far. She also shared that there will be a guest appearance from the Barnum Festival Ring Master, Frank Gennarini, as well as discussion about the planned Veterans and First Responder Center. The director added that she and First Selectman Vicki A. Tesoro are excited to be able to host Stephen Andrews for dinner at the Trumbull Marriott the evening before the event, along with Land Use Planner Rob Librandi, Chairman Sather, Commissioner Chase, and Administrative Clerk Gia Mentillo.

Ms. Bakalar stated that the construction of a shared workspace planned for Hawley Lane Mall, is underway. She stated that representatives of the project will be in attendance for the Business Appreciation Breakfast where there will be a project announcement with corresponding marketing materials.

Ms. Bakalar stated that she is in the process of planning ribbon cutting ceremonies for several businesses throughout town, including those located in the Long Hill Green.

Ms. Bakalar reported that Guacamole Grill has officially signed their lease with the Trumbull Westfield Mall and will be going before the Planning and Zoning Commission for a liquor permit shortly.

Ms. Bakalar further stated that Trumbull Café and Grill in Trumbull Center is moving across the street to the spot next door to Rings End, noting that renovations are underway. The director added that the Elite Program’s used bookstore has been approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission and will be moving into Trumbull Center, hopefully opening in December. Ms. Bakalar noted that these changes will attract attention to the area.

Planning Update

Director Bakalar informed the commission that she has reached out to the Secretary of State Office of Policy and Management in regards to the funds for the Trumbull Planning Study in the

amount of \$150,000. Ms. Bakalar noted that the town cannot put the Request for Proposals out or hire a contractor until the money has been formally received.

Ms. Bakalar advised commissioners to submit any questions or comments they have regarding the Trumbull Center Planning Study to Rob Librandi as there is still time.

Grant Update

Ms. Bakalar announced that she is expecting a significant amount of grant funding to become available at both the local and national level within the upcoming two years. In preparation, she stated that she and First Selectman Tesoro are working with the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG) to increase Trumbull's grant capacity to apply-for and effectively utilize those funds.

The director further stated that she is currently working to preemptively form a list of potential projects for grant funding, citing the Trumbull Long Term Recovery Committee's Needs Analysis as a guiding source as well as department head input and the 5 year Capital Plan. She informed that there is a deadline of October 7th for project submissions to the State Long Term Recovery Committee who will assist in evaluating potential sources of funding for each project, noting that all submissions must be for projects lacking in other sources of funding.

Event Update

Ms. Bakalar noted the earlier discussion of the Annual Business Appreciation Breakfast scheduled for Friday, October 15th at 8:00a.m. at the Trumbull Marriott.

The director announced that the Commercial Broker Lunch held at the River Valley Community on September 24th was very successful, well received, and much appreciated by members of the community, noting that she has been invited back to speak to members about local development. Ms. Bakalar stated that she and First Selectman Tesoro accompanied several brokers after the event to various vacant spaces in that neighborhood. Ms. Bakalar also noted discussions regarding the blighted building at 6 Cambridge Drive that the town is working to foreclose on.

Director Bakalar reported that the BMX East Coast Nationals have selected Trumbull as one of the 2022 destinations which attracts thousands of people from throughout the country, as evidenced in 2018 when the event was last held in Trumbull.

First Selectman Vicki A. Tesoro voiced her enthusiasm for the event, noting its tremendous turn out in 2018 and the phenomenal impact that had on local businesses.

Opportunity for Community Input

Mr. Stuart Pattison introduced himself as a resident of Trumbull and thanked the Commissioners for their commitment to the town. He went on to express concerns regarding Trumbull Center and the recent closing of the restaurant Bianco Rosso, which, he stated, was largely resultant of rental fees. He added that he, along with other residents, now feel there is a lack of high-end dining options within Trumbull. Mr. Pattison commended the redevelopment efforts occurring throughout town but pointed out that much of the business space in Trumbull Center is vacant,

asking that there be focus on filling vacancies in conjunction with larger projects. Lastly, he noted that he would be happy to help with such efforts in any way he can and thanked the Commission for their time.

Vice Chairman Kaufman voiced agreement with Mr. Pattison. She also shared that she recently toured the new Make-A-Wish Foundation center, stating that it is a tremendous asset for the town.

Commissioner Marcus asked that members of the public state both their name and address when speaking in the future, noting it is helpful to know a resident's proximity to regions being discussed. He went on to state that a closing of a business that opened just prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic is not necessarily a reflection of the community it lies within, but rather a reflection of the current state of our nation's economy and a lack demand for in-person dining.

First Selectman Tesoro stated that she and the town will continue to do all it can to encourage growth and development in Trumbull while effectively supporting existing businesses, noting she certainly does not want to see businesses closing in Trumbull. The First Selectman also commended the ongoing efforts of the Planning and Zoning Department in establishing and nourishing the new Long Hill Market area which has begun to attract new businesses to town.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:47p.m. by Commissioner Kaufman and seconded by Commissioner DeVecchio. The motion carried unanimously.

Dated at Trumbull, CT this 16th day of November, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gia Mentillo
ECDC Administrative Clerk

Cc: Rob Librandi, Land Use Planner
Doug Wenz, Zoning Enforcement Officer