

Town of Trumbull
Economic and Community Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 7, 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 June 7, 2022.

Attendance

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

Members Absent: None.

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 7:01 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of May 3, 2022 Minutes

A motion to approve the May 3, 2022 minutes was made by Commissioner Zamary and seconded by Commissioner Scheuble. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman’s Report

There was no Chairman’s report.

Director’s Report

Business Update:

Director Bakalar stated that there has been an uptick in leasing activities amongst Trumbull’s commercial centers. Two businesses are planned to occupy the remaining space in the Long Hill Market plaza. There is a prospective new use for the currently empty corner bank space in Trumbull Center previously occupied by Fairfield County Bank. Also in Trumbull Center,

Patrick Fahy will be opening a new restaurant in place of the former Bianco Rosso for which he is currently working to obtain a liquor license.

Community Development Update:

The house located on the corner of Whitney Avenue and Broadway is currently for sale, and it is possible that the property garners interest from businesses who may go before the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) to look into a new use for the space. Director Bakalar stated that a business use may be good for the Long Hill area in place of the existing three family home.

The Director stated that there has been continued, quality coverage of Trumbull in both the Trumbull Times and CT Post. Chairman Kaufman noted that Trumbull was highlighted on the front page of the CT Post that morning.

Planning Update:

The traffic light planned for the intersection near Edge Fitness on Monroe Turnpike went out to bid and a bidder has been identified. The project is waiting on final approval from the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) to review the potential contractor to ensure their practices are compliant with CHRO policies. Once approved, the contract can be finalized and construction can start. However, there may be delays in ordering the lighting equipment due to ongoing supply chain issues.

The traffic light project planned for the Long Hill Green area has received approval from CT DEEP to allow sidewalk construction over the covert at Governor's Ridge. Meaning that the project is now fully approved and designed, and the final package will go out to bid for construction in the coming months.

Director Bakalar informed that the First Selectman intends to put out announcements to the public regarding any potential disturbances as construction begins on both of the aforementioned projects. Both projects are important to community safety as well as economic development as they make the area more assessable to the public and more supportive of multi-modal transit.

The development on the Monroe-Trumbull border is still in the planning phase but may be ready to present to PZC by August.

Grant Update:

Director Bakalar stated that the Town is still seeking funding opportunities to improve the Long Hill Green area, with particular hopes of expanding the area's green space.

Ms. Bakalar stated that she worked with a professional grant consultant to submit a grant application to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation on May 19th in hopes of garnering funding to finish the pervious paver project outside of Layla's Falafel and complete the stormwater management project for the area.

She also put in an application to DEEP for the funding, though only one of the two grants will be needed. This will allow unification with the area in front of Franco Giani's where the pervious paver seating area is regularly utilized.

Funding opportunities are also being sought to cover the construction costs to complete the Pequonnock trail connections down Whitney Avenue to the trail head. The path up to Dunnellen Road has been completed and the remaining portion is approximately 80% designed.

There has been a Small Town Economic Assistance Program Grant recently opened to applicants for which submissions are due on August 15th and there is a \$500,000 per project funding limit. Director Bakalar stated that the Town has done well accessing funding through this program in the past, but they have not yet determined which project will be submitted for consideration.

Event Update:

Director Bakalar stated that there are approximately 30 businesses registered for the upcoming Grow Your Home Based Business event scheduled for June 8th at 8:30am at Jeff Works, approximately 75% of which are women owned businesses. She provided an overview of the agenda items and highlighted the inclusion of an excellent group of panelists from various resource agencies who offer support to businesses. The Commission was invited and encouraged to join the event.

There will be a restaurant week planned for the fall for which Director Bakalar requested Commission volunteers to help garner participation from local restaurants. Vice Chairman DelVecchio and Commissioner Zmary volunteered. Ms. Bakalar stated she has begun visiting perspective locations, including the newly opened SICILEats where she had an excellent dining experience.

The Annual Business Breakfast will be conducted at the end of October, planning for which will commence in the coming months.

Commissioner Sather asked for an update on obtaining additional members for the Commission, noting that there may be issues obtaining a quorum for meetings in the summer months. Director Bakalar informed that several applications were recently received by the First Selectman's office and are being reviewed, noting that they are seeking a member with a background related to economic and/or community development whose specialty compliments that of other seated members. Commissioner Zmary stated that it can be difficult to find people who have the time to dedicate to the Commission and that all boards and organizations she has served on have had difficulties keeping a full membership due to conflicting obligations. Commissioner Marcus informed that though people may show initial interest their perspective may change after reviewing the application itself; noting that many people encumbered financial hardships during the pandemic from which they are still recovering and residents who owe back taxes to Trumbull cannot be appointed to a commission. He further stated that it is not the role of the Commission or its members to appoint new members, it is solely the purview of the First Selectman's Office.

Chairman Kaufman voiced concerns regarding the adopt-a-ramp sign occupied by the Residences on Main, which is currently in an unsightly condition. Director Bakalar informed that

the sign owner has hired a landscaping company to work on the area surrounding the sign, but work is delayed because the wrong sign was initially delivered and a new one is on its way.

Vice Chairman DeVecchio asked if the director could share any specific details about the Trumbull Center project that is likely to go before PZC in August. Director Bakalar informed that the project did a pre-application review with the PZC in February during which they received feedback which they are currently working to address. The preliminary plans indicate that the proposed project will be for a mixed use development.

Commissioner Marcus stated that there has been recent bad press about Trumbull regarding the SeaQuest aquarium, which is not good for the mall or the town and degrades the community's efforts toward revitalizing the mall. Director Bakalar informed that SeaQuest is licensed primarily through the USDA and CT DEEP with limited oversight from the Trumbull Health Department and other town entities whose authority does not extend to animal care.

Commissioner Sather asked what was being done at the town level to rectify ongoing issues at the Westfield Trumbull Mall, particularly the hole in the parking garage and unsightly appearance of the exterior. Director Bakalar stated the Town is working to pursue blight action for the property regarding the appearance and safety of the building, noting that the issues lie with the ownership of the property as opposed to local staff. Because the owner, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield (URW), is looking to sell off many of its properties at this time, it has stopped putting capital investment into the property, and, unfortunately, the Town has limited authority over the property. The Director stated that the town is addressing the Lord and Taylor unit separately as it has separate ownership by Hodson Bay Realty. She also informed that the Town building official has been closely overseeing the remediation process for the parking garage. The Director informed that the mall has had the parking garage fully inspected, the inspection results have been evaluated by both their staff and town staff, they have hired a construction manager to oversee the project, various construction scenarios have been laid out for consideration, they are determining the best course of action for repairs to be done, and, once they have done so, they will file the necessary paperwork with the Town to commence construction to repair the garage.

Chairman Kaufman asked Commissioner Sather if he would be willing to work with her to draft a letter to the owners of the mall on behalf of the Commission regarding the cleanliness of the property and its impact on the Town and its residents. Commissioner Sather confirmed he would be willing to do so.

Commissioner LeVino asked if the percentage of women attending the home based business event was reflective of the overall percentage of woman led home based businesses in Trumbull, and inquired as to how large such businesses tend to be. Director Bakalar stated she did not have that information at the time, but noted that her experience leads her to believe they are majority woman owned businesses. She further stated that home based businesses can essentially be any size as far a reach, revenue, and resources. Chairman Kaufman asked for a list of businesses who attend the event so that the Commission could get an idea of those present in Town. Commissioner LeVino asked how many home based business owners have their business as a secondary versus primary occupation. Director Bakalar stated that she did not have that information, but noted that she has encountered many home based businesses which started as

secondary sources of income and grew enough to become primary occupations. Commissioner Scheuble stated that these types of businesses can generate millions of dollars.

Commissioner Sather provided an update from the Sustainable Trumbull team, stating that they are working to garner town support for several of their upcoming projects and plan to meet with George Estrada to discuss the particulars of their proposed projects. The group is working to implement Big Belly compacting trash containers at all public recreation locations, promote grass recycling at the transfer station, facilitate a tree replacement program, and optimize the community garden through volunteer based support. Commissioner LeVino stated that Commissioner Sather should be able to be sworn into the Sustainable Trumbull Commission very soon as he would be sending in his formal letter of resignation in the coming days.

Opportunity for Community Input

There were no members of the public present for comment.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:13p.m. by Vice Chairman DelVecchio and seconded by Commissioner Zamary. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gia Mentillo
ECDC Clerk

Cc: Rob Librandi
Doug Wenz