

Town of Bloomfield  
Economic Development Commission Meeting  
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #5  
DRAFT MINUTES  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2015

**Present:** Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Fred Hesketh, Harold Harper, Richard McDermott and Jerry Katrichis

Also present: Director of Planning and Economic Development José Giner, Mayor Joan Gamble, Don Poland, Rob Rowson, Phil Schenck Jr, Town Manager, Katie Booher, Niagara Bottling and Laura James, Recording Secretary

Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

**1. Niagara Bottling Update**

José Giner, Director of Planning introduced Katie Booher, with Niagara Bottling. Mr. Giner stated that the Finance Committee recommended approval of a tax agreement subject to the Town Attorney's review. The Town Council will be making a final decision on Monday the 14<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Booher stated that someone from the company will attend the meeting to make a presentation and to answer any questions from the Council. She asked the EDC members if they could show up and show support. Ms. Booher added that, on the behalf of Niagara Bottling, she appreciates all the support received throughout the process from the Town of Bloomfield. Niagara is looking forward to making a final decision within the next two weeks before the Holidays.

José Giner, Director of Planning stated the agreement he is recommending with Niagara Bottling is a seven-year tax graduated abatement of the incremental increase in taxes. Whatever the property is paying now is fixed. They will be paying the same amount and more. A rise in mill rate will increase taxes. Mr. Giner stated that the Town gave Pepperidge Farm a tax abatement of seven years at 100% and the Apartments seven years at 100%. Mr. Giner added that all new machinery is exempt by State statute, but personal property is not exempt. He said that in second year the Town will get \$74,000 worth of taxes, where we would have gotten only \$35,000 if the land were vacant. Even though we are abating 4.9 million we will be getting back \$1.8 million in taxes and fees of during that seven years versus \$260,000 if land were to remain vacant. In year eight and beyond they will pay approximately \$969,000 per year in taxes. As a claw back provision, we are asking for a four year commitment to stay after this agreement, which would make us whole again in terms of the 4.9 million originally abated. Mr. Giner stated that this is basically what we are asking the Town Council to approve.

Ms. Bercowetz, stated are they financially stable to pay taxes?

José Giner stated they are multi-national family owned business that's growing and owns quite a few facilities and just expanded into Mexico. There are no guarantees, but he felt pretty certain they are a viable company if there putting that type of investment into the Town.

Ms. Bercowetz asked are there any issues with MDC?

José Giner stated Phil Schenck, Town Manager is asking MDC if they could be at the meeting to answer any questions regarding long term water supply and MDC assures that they have enough capacity to serve with some upgrades to the line. The Chairman has been to two or three meetings with Niagara Bottling.

## **2. Update of Town Center Apartments**

José Giner, stated the Town received their site plan. There will be a meeting on Thursday, December 17, 2015 with the TPZ at 7 p.m. for Site Plan review. He noted that it's not a public hearing. Mr. Giner stated that there are 215 units in this phase - they were approved for a total of 400 on the master plan. They are looking to start site work in the spring. It is a two-year construction project with little or no disruption to the street system other than for utilities.

### **Goman & York**

Mr. Rowlson, presented a poster board with the theme "Bloomfield Means Business" for display in the lobby and use in other promotional efforts. He stated that hopefully businesses will see the poster and know that the Town cares and is interested in businesses coming into Bloomfield. It's a subliminal message to business.

Ms. Bercowetz asked are there any plans for electronic billboards. She felt a need to get the message outside of the Town and the Town Hall. She stated that the Town needs layer upon layer of advertising.

Mr. Rowlson stated the budget is very expensive for billboards - around \$4500 a month for fixed billboards. The poster board was made solely for the Town Hall. It hasn't been something we have looked at but if this Committee would like us to discuss it with Phil, we could do that, get some numbers and bring this back.

Mr. Poland stated that Goman+York are in the process of preparing some other marketing tactics such as trade shows. The sign will not stand alone. Best recruitment comes from satisfied customers.

Mr. Rowlson stated that The Bloomfield Business Alliance are continuing to meet and work on brochure for businesses in the center of town. They will be having a party this month, Monday next week 5:00 p.m. at Isaacs Bagel Café where they will unveil their business logo and recognize a few businesses. The Hartford Courant will also be there.

Mr. Rowlson stated EDC should talk about lower Blue Hills Avenue, Don is doing a preliminary report on re-investment in that area and we should put this on the *agenda for next meeting*. Primary focus is South of Cottage Grove Road, but do have some thoughts on the area North up to Save-Mor.

Mr. Poland stated they have some thoughts on the area south of Cottage Grove Road, and we can be ready for January.

José Giner, also talked about joint meeting with Land Use Subcommittee of the Town Council regarding a presentation and next steps concerning marketing and taking advantage of the new TIF legislation. He stated that it may be a good time to look at tax abatement policy now that we have the TIF legislation. He stated that with the TIF's you get some money back into improvements within the District. The new Mr. Giner said that the new TIF legislation took effect on October 1, 2015. He doesn't don't think any Towns have jumped into it yet.

Mr. Poland stated they can be ready for a TIF presentation at any time.

## **3. Update on Gillette Ridge**

José Giner stated Cigna has paid all back taxes and contracted out with a firm related to Arnold Palmer golf to run the golf course and do the maintenance.

Phil Schenck, stated Cigna paid back taxes of \$150,000 on the golf course which was one of the largest that were in arrears. He noted that they were performing maintenance to get ready for next season.

## **4. Minutes**

*Bonnie Bercowetz made a motion to accept the minutes of Tuesday, November 8, 2015. Fred Hesketh seconded and was approved unanimously*

## **5. Election of Officers**

*Jerry Katrichis made a motion to nominate Jerry Long as Chairman. The motion was seconded by Fred Hesketh, and passed unanimously.*

*Fred Hesketh made a motion of nominate Bonnie Bercowetz as clerk. The motion was seconded by Fred Hesketh, and the nomination passed unanimously.*

## **6. Update Wintonbury Mall**

José Giner, stated that the only contact that he's had recently was regarding signage variances from a representative of the owners. He believes it would be premature to ask for a variance before going before the Town Plan and Zoning Commission with proposed amendments to the regulations.

Mr. Rowson, stated he had a chance encounter with the leasing agent from Colliers who does all the leasing for Wintonbury Mall. She has promised to call and set up meeting to discuss the Mall issues. Mr. Rowson stated that he will report back next month. He noted that a lot of tenants are on month to month leases.

## **7. Filley Park**

José Giner stated Filley Park is finished for season. The only thing left to do is move the Eversource box. Benches are nice. The Town is proceeding with getting consultant to work on bid specs and details for next phase.

Phil Schenck, stated that there is interest in forming a committee to do corporate fundraising for Filley Park. He stated that he would be putting money in budget for phase 2 of project and hopefully implement this coming year. The plantings will be finished this spring followed by a ribbon cutting in celebration of the completion of Phase I. He is hopeful in getting the \$500,000 or \$600,000 needed in addition to the 1.1 million we already have to do Phase 2, which consists of removal of the damn, dredging of the pond and creation of the fish ladder. Mr. Schenck stated that the Town was still looking for an appropriate program to get rid of the geese. The Eastern Water Chestnut Remediation Program is under contract but it is a stop-gap measure. Further work will be needed so that the pond will not get overgrown again.

### **Other**

José Giner, reported that he, Mr. Schenck and the Town Engineer had met with the Chief Engineer from Conn DOT regarding the roundabout project at the Town Green intersections. He stated that ConnDOT will run some modeling to determine if there would be any downstream impacts if this were to be implemented. The engineer stated that he was hopeful that this project would be eligible for 100% funding from the Federal Government. If so, the Town will not have to put in anything.

José Giner, stated he received an email from Kurt Cameron of Hooker Brewer regarding a hybrid brew pub permit sign off. He will use the opportunity to speak with Mr. Cameron regarding plans for future.

Mr. Poland stated tracking new owner of Granby Warehouse.

José Giner stated there is some interest from property on Tobey Road next to the Town-owned lot at 97 Granby Street in possibly developing a restaurant/jazz club. The owner wants the Town to sell him the property next door for the parking needed to make it work.

Ms. Bercowetz asked is it zoned for jazz club.

José Giner stated it is gateway zoned and may possibly need special permits, but they have to solve the parking issues first.

Joan Gamble, Mayor, stated a gentleman is asking for her to attend a Neighborhood Group meeting regarding blighted properties and it will be held at the Blue Hills Volunteer Fire Department in January and would appreciate if others could attend.

Ms. Bercowetz asked how many blight compliance officers do we have?

José Giner stated that the ZEO is the compliance officer with some help from the Police Department. He noted that we have two Building officials and he was in the process of asking for a third. He is recommending making the job description for the new position to include blight inspection duties.

José Giner stated next meeting will be January 12, 2016 at 8:30 a.m.

#### **8. Adjournment**

*Bonnie Bercowetz made a motion to adjourn at 9:30. Motion was seconded by Jerry Katrichis and approved unanimously.*