

Town of Bloomfield
Economic Development Commission Meeting
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #5
MINUTES
Tuesday, July 14, 2015

Present: Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Michele Bononi, Rich McDermott, Jerry Katrichis, Fred Hesketh, and Harold Harper

Also present: José Giner, Joel Neuwirth, Dale Bertoldi, Rich Hughes, David Driver, Rob Rowlson, and Philip Schenck.

Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

Ms. Bononi made a motion to accept minutes of the June 9, 2015 meeting with noted corrections. Ms. Bercowetz seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Wintonbury Mall

Rob Rowlson of Goman + York reported that the Wintonbury Mall auction would be taking place between August 17 and August 19. It is an on-line auction. Bidders had to post a \$25,000 deposit and show proof of at least \$1.9 million in financing. We will not know who is bidding nor how many bidders there are. He stated that Goman + York had been contacted by 5 or 6 different groups that showed an interest in the property. He is optimistic that we will get a good bidder for the property.

Ms. Bercowetz asked if the group that includes Bob Weiner gets the property would there be any impact on the Town Center Apartment project. Mr. Rowlson stated that he would see it as a positive.

Ms. Bononi asked if all the inquiries were from parties that could bring a development forward. Mr. Rowlson replied that everyone that they had been in contact with had the capacity.

Report on recommendations from Parking Subcommittee

Ms. Bononi summarized the report that her subcommittee had submitted after meeting a couple of times in the past two months. Among other items they had discussed how to best utilize public spaces during off-peak hours.

Ms. Bononi made a motion to refer report items 1,2,3,5,10,12,13,14 and 16 to the full Town Plan and Zoning (TPZ) Commission for their consideration. Mr. McDermott seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Bercowetz asked about the status of the Town Center Traffic Study. Mr. Schenck stated that it is funded in the budget but we were awaiting to see if the new Mall owners had any plans that might impact our study.

Chairman Long commended Ms. Bononi and her subcommittee for a job well done.

Filley Park Update

Mr. Giner updated the EDC on the status of the Filley Park Phase I bids. They were due to be opened on July 30 and the winning bid awarded shortly thereafter. Work should begin by mid to late September and be completed before the start of winter. Mr. Schenck summarized the financing that was anticipated for the next phases of the Filley park improvement plan stating that Phase II would be the most expensive.

Mr. Schenck noted that there was an article in the Hartford Courant regarding an invasive species, the eastern water chestnut, which was propagating on the ponds surface. The recommended solution is to totally remove it which would involve the destruction of the roots at the bottom of the pond. He stated that we can take interim measures to clean up the surface growth but that the ultimate destruction would come when we dredge the pond and remove the roots.

Ms. Bononi asked about de-watering the plants and where they would ultimately be disposed at. Mr. Schenck was not sure but that it would be all part of a plan and that they were conferring with the UConn plant scientists and DEEP to come up with a strategy to safely remove the plants from the pond.

Chairman Long noted that Mr. Giner would be on vacation during the next scheduled meeting of August 11 and asked if the Commission would want to consider cancelling the August meeting. There was a consensus to re-schedule the meeting for August 18 which would be a day after Mr. Giner gets back.

Staff Update

Mr. Giner reported that the Town was helping coordinate a visit by Niagara Bottling similar to the one held last year. He reported that Bloomfield was back on the short list of locations for their northeast bottling plant. The meeting would be held on July 28 at the Town Hall and will include Town staff, State officials, representatives from the utilities, and staff from the Hartford MetroAlliance. A full morning of discussions was anticipated. Mr. Giner noted that Niagara Bottling was looking at two possible sites in Bloomfield.

Mr. Giner also mentioned that the Town Council had endorsed a Business Energy Efficiency initiative that was being coordinated by the Town's Clean Energy and Environment Committee (CEEC). Mr. Rowson stated that this is a great program for local businesses.

Chairman Long asked if the EDC should endorse this program. Mr. Schenck stated that it would be a positive move to endorse this program.

Chairman Long asked that the group that was putting this together be invited to the next EDC meeting.

Mr. Katrichis stated that the Chamber of Commerce had not seen this proposal yet and that they would not be meeting until September. He stated that he was an officer of the Chamber and that he would bring this up at the upcoming executive committee retreat.

Ms. Bononi expressed concern about being asked to rubber-stamp this proposal after the fact. She stated that communication on this program has been lacking and hoped that it be made clear that better and more complete communication is available. Mr. Neuwirth stated that was CEEC's program and that the Eversource and the vendors had been working through them.

Ms. Bononi stated that she was interested in a promotion plan for available industrial land in Town. She would like to see us better promote industries that provide premium pay jobs. She proposed that we have a bulleted plan to market available land. Rob Rowson stated that he would talk it over with his colleagues at Goman+York and report back at the next EDC meeting.

Ms. Bononi made a motion that the consultants provide a bulleted outline of a plan to market advanced manufacturing sites and that a response be provided at the next EDC meeting. Mr. McDermott seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Neuwirth gave a report on Celebrate Bloomfield which was just held. He stated that he had received positive feedback from a number of people and businesses. He stated that planning would soon start for the 2016 celebration. There was currently a Committee of six people that would work on it and welcome any suggestions or other input.

Mr. Neuwirth also reported that he had spoken with Chris Grant at the University of Hartford to try to foster increased cooperation between the Town and the University. They were planning on having bus tours of Bloomfield for incoming freshmen and provide the opportunity for Bloomfield businesses to have their marketing materials available in the orientation packets that were given to each incoming

freshman. He also had raised the possibility of providing scholarships targeted at Bloomfield students and other opportunities for cooperation.

Ms. Bononi congratulated Mr. Neuwirth for a job well done on the celebrate Bloomfield event.

Mr. Rowson stated that the Center Merchants group was working on putting together a brochure that would be marketed to the University of Hartford students.

Ms. Bercowetz stated that Copaco Plaza management should be contacted also to see if they wanted to participate in the UHart promotion.

David Driver from Goman+York stated that there was little to report on the Cigna-Anthem merger. He said there was "radio silence" from the two sides at the moment. He noted that a portion of the MetLife building that Cigna formerly owned was for lease and that he had approached a firm from Connecticut about the possibility of leasing the 250,000 sf that was available.

Motion was made by Jerry Katrichis to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 am. Seconded by Bonnie Bercowetz and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
José Giner, AICP, Director of Planning and Economic Development