

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

Present: Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Michele Bononi, Fred Hesketh

Also present: José Giner, Mayor Syd Schulman, Deputy Mayor Joan Gamble, Councilman Joel Neuwirth, Rich Hughes, David Driver, Mike Goman, Rob Rowlson, and Sharron Howe

Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:30am.

Ms. Bercowetz made a motion to accept minutes of the August 18, 2015 meeting. Ms. Bononi seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Wintonbury Mall

José Giner, reported that the Wintonbury Mall auction had closed and that there was speculation on a potential buyer from the west coast. The reported top bid was \$4.9 million. Mike Goman stressed that there was no confirmation on who the winning bidder was. Mr. Goman stated that he had checked his sources and colleagues on the west coast and could not get any insight into the rumored winning bidder.

Ms. Bercowetz asked what Mr. Goman's thoughts were regarding the final price. Mr. Goman thought that it was on the high end. He speculated that the top bidders may be just putting together a deal to market to other investors.

Ms. Bercowetz asked when the winning bidder would be revealed. Mr. Goman replied that it is usually after 30 days have passed since the close of bids. The bids closed on August 19 so we should be hearing something around the end of September unless the seller and buyer agree on an extension to secure all the commitments.

Ms. Bononi asked if the property was large enough for a California style lifestyle shopping center development. Mr. Goman did not think so.

Mr. Rowlson stated that with such a high price it may be difficult to raise additional capital for improvements.

Mayor Schulman asked about the percentage of top bidders that decide to walk away from the deal during the due diligence period. Mr. Goman stated that it was less than 10% but not likely in this case since the bidders had put up hard money up front that they would lose.

Mr. Goman stated that he would keep the Town updated on any information that he receives.

Business Energy Savings Initiative

Chairman Long stated that this item was a follow-up to the presentation made to the EDC at the August 18 meeting and asked for discussion on what action the members wished to take.

Ms. Bercowetz believed that the EDC was the tail-end of the process and felt that they did not need the EDC's support to go forward with this.

Ms. Bononi stated that she did not have enough information to make a decision based on the material presented. She stated that she supported what they are trying to achieve.

Rob Rowlson said that Eversource would be attending the Business Center Merchants Alliance meeting this month to promote the program.

David Driver noted that the larger businesses in Town had been using the energy savings program currently offered by Eversource.

Mr. Giner noted that there was a business after hours kick-off scheduled for September 30 at Carbone's Kitchen.

Mike Goman stated that this program worked well for the larger building owners who had larger buildings where the savings were substantial. Not sure whether there was as much opportunity for the tenants to directly save.

Chairman Long stated that it looked like there was no consensus by the members to take any action on this item at today's meeting.

Filley Park Update

Mr. Giner reported that the notice to proceed with Phase I had gone out to the contractor and that work should start within a week or two and be finished by the first week of December.

He also reported that Public Works was working with a consultant and DEEP to find a temporary solution to the European water chestnut problem that was covering the pond with vegetation. The ultimate solution would be to tear out the roots at the bottom of the pond during the dredging that was proposed in Phase II of the Filley Pond work.

Ms. Bercowetz stated that the Town should find a method to communicate with citizens regarding what was happening at the Pond. She stated that she gets a lot of questions that could best be answered by updating a web page or having an e-mail list.

Staff and Commission Updates

Mr. Giner stated that Niagara Bottling would be making a follow-up visit to meet with staff and the utilities on October 13. He stated that this was apposite sign that Niagara was still very much interested in coming to Bloomfield.

Ms. Bercowetz asked where the proposed site might be. Mr. Giner stated that it seemed that they were concentrating on the Woodland Avenue site which was currently a sand and gravel operation.

Dave Driver reported that Niagara was working with the MDC to try to change the ordinance regarding how sewer charges are calculated. He stated that the current method of charging based on water usage would be a detriment to a company like Niagara that bottles the water rather than sending it back through the sewer system.

Councilman Neuwirth stated that he was chairing the committee that was working on Celebrate Bloomfield for 2016 and that any and all ideas were welcome on how to make this an even bigger success than this year's Celebration. He also stated that he was assuming the role of liaison between the Chamber of Commerce and the Town Council and hoped to promote increased cooperation between the Town and the Chamber.

Ms. Bononi asked what the status was of the parking subcommittee's recommendations to the Town Plan and Zoning Commission (TPZ). Mr. Giner stated that it would be on the September 24 TPZ Agenda for discussion.

Ms. Bononi asked about the status of the marketing material for available industrial land. Mr. Goman stated that his firm had just finished their brochure and would have the bulleted list for the next EDC meeting.

Rob Rowson stated that the next Center merchants meeting would be at 8:30 on Monday, September 21 at Carbone's Kitchen. He said that they had put together a flyer and produced 1,000 pieces that were distributed to the University of Hartford's incoming freshmen.

Ms. Bercowetz asked if there could be a shuttle bus between the University of Hartford campus and the center. Mr. Rowlson stated that he believes that the University has its own bus that stops in Bloomfield. Ms. Bercowetz thought that it only went to COPACO center. Mr. Rowlson said that he would check on that.

Mr. Giner stated that a new Urgent Care medical facility had been approved by the TPZ to go into vacant space at the Wintonbury Mall. There was discussion as to whether the medical center had a signed lease given the uncertain status of ownership. Mr. Giner stated that he had received a letter of permission from the property owners of record.

It was noted that the next Regular meeting was scheduled for October 13 which was the date that Niagara Bottling was going to be at Town Hall. Mr. Giner and Mr. Driver would not be able to attend the EDC meeting as a result. **It was the consensus of the members present that the October 13, 2015 meeting be re-scheduled to Tuesday, October 20 at 8:30 in the morning.**

Motion was made by Fred Hesketh to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 a.m. Seconded by Michelle Bononi and passed unanimously.

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