

Town of Bloomfield  
Economic Development Commission Meeting  
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #2

**DRAFT MINUTES**

TUESDAY, December 13, 2016

***Please note that these Minutes have not been approved by the EDC***

**Present:** Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Michelle Bononi, Jerry Katrichis, Harold Harper, Lenny Hudgen, and Fred Hesketh

Also present: Director of Planning and Economic Development, José Giner, Phil Schenck, Town Manager, Mayor Joan Gamble, Deputy Mayor Syd Schulman, Mike Goman, Dave Driver, and Laura James, Recording Secretary

1. Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m.  
Chairman Long announced that he would be resigning from the EDC after this meeting due to the fact that he had no longer would be residing in the Town and had sold his last property.
2. **Minutes of November 16, 2016 regular meeting**  
*Commissioner Bercowetz made a motion to accept the minutes of November 16, 2016. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harper and passed unanimously with corrections.*
3. **Public Comment**  
*None*
4. **Goman + York – update**

Mr. Driver gave an update on Trader Joe's. Mr. Driver stated that he visited Trader Joe's Allentown World Class Distribution Center to see how the operation worked and to see the footprint. Mr. Driver stated that Trader Joe's cares mostly about its image with respect to its stores and customer service. The warehouse and distribution facilities are very low-key. Mr. Driver stated that the Allentown Trader Joe's services stores from North Carolina to Maine which is about 100 stores. The facility has approximately 450 to 800 employees and 150 truck contractors. Mr. Driver stated that Trader Joe's is eager to see something in New England area to service its 55 stores.

Commissioner Bononi asked how Trader Joe's came to consider Bloomfield. Mr. Driver stated that Trader Joe's put out an RFP called Project Woodlands. The Metro Hartford Alliance then alerted the Towns in Central Connecticut. Bloomfield expressed an interest and their real estate consultant and broker visited the site at Phoenix Crossing with, along with Mr. Giner and a representative of the property owner Griffin Land. They apparently liked the site and followed up with requests to meet with staff to go over application timelines and logistics.

Mr. Goman stated that the Bloomfield Alliance will not have a December meeting and will resume in January. Mr. Goman stated that he attended the International Council of Shopping Centers meeting in New York City with over 10,000 attendees. Mr. Goman stated that attendance was up about 10%. Mr. Goman stated that there is not a lot of new development in retail in New England. Mr. Goman stated that this year for the first time there was a real absence of national retailers. The retailers that did attend were Dollar Stores and Family Dollar and Dollar General, Hair Cutting Franchises, and Sandwich Shops.

Commissioner Bononi asked what Mr. Goman thought this means over the next five years. Mr. Goman stated that he does not anticipate much retail activity - there will be pockets here and

there. Mr. Goman stated that the industry's take on retail is internet retail is still less than 10% of the market, but is having an impact. Mr. Goman also stated that there will be a merger of catalog, bricks and mortar, and online presence. He believes that this is how retail businesses will operate in the future.

Commissioner Bononi stated that maybe the Commission needs to readjust and look at the target list. Mr. Goman stated that the Town needs less retail and more food and beverage establishments, which can be labeled as arts and entertainment. He believes that food and Beverage needs to be a primary focus in the Town Center.

Commissioner Bononi asked if there is some way to keep EDC apprised of knowing the entities that are being contacted if they are not confidential. Mr. Goman stated that they are always chasing something down and can fire off a blind email.

Commissioner Bononi stated that it would be very helpful in the Town getting a target list together to know who is out there. Mr. Driver stated that he is a little concerned with confidentiality and it is a competitive issue and the names in the report should not be discussed too much. Mr. Goman stated that they will talk it over with Mr. Giner.

**5. Discussion of the EDC's role in commenting on Tax Abatement Policy with the Land Use Sub-Committee**

Commissioner Bercowetz stated that the EDC is in an odd position because the Land Use Sub-Committee has asked for input and they can only speak as individuals.

Commissioner Bononi stated that if the Council wants EDC's opinion then they should ask for that opinion and the EDC will do the work and give the Council what it wants.

Mayor Gamble stated that the EDC's opinion is being solicited because EDC brings a wealth of knowledge in business which would be very helpful. Mayor Gamble stated that there is a meeting on December 20, 2016 and would like EDC to attend.

Mr. Schenck stated that there are currently two proposals, Butler Construction and Trader Joe's and there will be an open discussion regarding moving ahead with one or both request. Mr. Schenck further discussed abatement policy and how the draft policy will work.

Commissioner Bononi stated that she feels that the EDC is absent in the process in an official way and according to the State the EDC is charged to look at the ideas in formulating policy.

Deputy Mayor Schulman stated that EDC is needed as part of the process and the Council looks to the EDC to give suggestions and be part of the conversation. He stated that, whether the EDC is speaking as individual or as the EDC, any opinion is welcome. Every step of the way the EDC is a partner.

Commissioner Bononi stated that at the point in which a recommendation is needed by EDC the Council should just ask.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated that the EDC should also look at the timing of the meetings because EDC meetings occur after the Land Use Meeting.

Deputy Mayor Schulman stated that he has no problem in calling special meetings. Currently the Council is looking for an opinion regarding Butler and Trader Joe's. There was further discussion regarding attendance at the December 20 Land Use Sub-Committee meeting.

**6. Discussion of Pending Requests for Tax Incentives.**

Commissioner Bercowetz suggest having a special meeting to formulate an opinion as a Commission. There was a consensus to have a meeting on Wednesday, December 28, 2016 from 8:30 to 10:30.

**7. Staff and Commission Member Updates on Various Topics of Interest**

Mr. Giner stated that the Department is very busy with permits. Deringer-Ney is pretty much finished. He stated that the Town center apartments are on target. The Building officials are working over-time to keep up with permits and inspections. He reported that staff held a Pre-construction meeting with CREC. They are doing soil remediation as part of their first phase and should be ready to construct after July. He also stated that the Seabury construction is going full-blast.

Commissioner Bononi asked what actions are taken with blighted properties and if it is done on an on-going basis. Mr. Giner stated that yes, it is an on-going process and in November there were 120 unregistered notices sent out. Commissioner Bononi stated that a month by month list would be very good. Mr. Giner stated that he would do so.

Mr. Goman stated that there is nothing new to report at Wintonbury Mall.

Mr. Giner stated that another permit for Filley Park was needed from the Army Corp of Engineers.

Commissioner Bononi stated that EDC is interested in better communication. Commissioner Bononi also stated that she watched the Council meeting in regards to roundabouts and recommends the Council pay for a traffic engineer to look at the impact of what is being proposed, because once the change is made it is forever. Commissioner Bononi further stated that Mr. Giner invited the EDC on the walkability Tour and it was a good exercise but no one knew who the applicant was. There should be improvement in the communication.

**8. Public Comment**

David Mann stated that he was glad to hear comments about small business development. He would like the Council to consider asking Trader Joe's about putting a retail store in the Center. He was concerned that a roundabout could have a negative impact on existing trees and would not necessarily enhance the character of the Town Center.

Kevin Gough stated that the presentation on the roundabout was good and informative. One of the things missing is a complete design. There were no slides on the cons only the pros. Mr. Gough further discussed the Tax Abatement policy and Mr. Schenck's comments on the policy. He also felt that Trader Joe's should be required to put a retail outlet in the Town Center.

**9. Adjournment**

Commissioner Bercowetz thanked Chairman Long for his years of service to the Town of Bloomfield.

*Commissioner Bercowetz made a motion to adjourn at 10:00 a.m. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Katrichis and passed unanimously.*