

Town of Bloomfield
Economic Development Commission Meeting
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #5
DRAFT MINUTES
TUESDAY, October 18, 2016

Present: Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Michelle Bononi, Fred Hesketh, and Jerry Katrichis, Harold Harper
Not Present:

Also present: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Jose' Giner, Phil Schenck, Town Manager, Joan Gamble, Mayor, Dale Bertoldi, Dave Driver, Mike Goman, Don Poland, and Laura James, Recording Secretary

1. Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

2. **Minutes of August 23, 2016 regular meeting**

Commissioner Bononi made a motion to accept the minutes of September 13, 2016.

Commissioner Bercowetz seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. **Public Comment**

No comments

4. **Continued Discussion of EDC mission statement and its implementation**

Chairman Long stated that the mission statement should include promoting and maintaining a young presence in which Bloomfield is a good place to live, work, play, invest and do business. Chairman Long noted that the EDC had a draft prepared by Commissioner Bononi from the last meeting that contained a number of possible mission statements. He asked the Commission if there was a consensus on which statement was preferable as a working draft. The consensus was to go with #2 of the mission statements.

Commissioner Bercowetz made a motion to accept Mission Statement #2 mission as noted in Commissioner Bononi's handout as a working draft. Commissioner Bononi seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of the Motion

Commissioner Bononi would like Mike Goman to craft language based on Mission Statement #2 and email it to the Commission before the next meeting for discussion.

Commissioner Bononi made a motion for Goman & York to come up with a few versions of the language of the mission statement and to send to EDC for response, by next meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harper and the motion passed unanimously.

5. **Goman&York – update**

Mr. Poland stated that there was a good turnout for the Business Alliance Meeting. The members decided to push off the date of the Business Guide until the beginning of the year. Mr. Poland stated that a Business Association is not easy to organize and he was very impressed with the turn out and the professionalism of the Association.

Mr. Giner stated that the bike shop owner attended the meeting and had very good suggestions. Mr. Rowson is working on trying to expand the Alliance area.

Mr. Giner stated that the Chamber of Commerce is working on an agreement with Cigna to promote Chamber businesses internally.

Councilman Neuwirth stated that a Bus Tour will be on Thursday the 12th. They will pick up University of Hartford students and tour the future apartment complex on Jerome Avenue and apartments on Brighton Park, and have a bite to eat at Republic, Concetta's, Naatiya Indian Restaurant, and visit the Hartford Baking Co.

Commissioner Bercowetz asked if anyone from Ace Hardware Plaza attended the Alliance meeting. Mr. Giner stated that Ace Hardware had attend previous meetings but not lately. He noted that they had also participated in Chamber of Commerce events.

Mr. Driver stated that Swift Textile Metalizing received an award as one of the top 25 businesses from Lockheed. He noted that Nature's Grocery Store and a new Distillery had shown some interest in locating in Bloomfield. He noted that overall, things are looking active in Town.

Mr. Giner stated that Urgent Care Center is proceeding. He also noted that the owner of Thai Palace interested in the Cigar Store space as a possible breakfast/lunch restaurant. A Temporary Staffing business also interested in the space at the Wintonbury Mall. He noted that the Church is having issues with the building code and has hired an architect to help.

Mr. Giner stated that a Thai Restaurant is interested in going in where Marks Barbecue was on Mountain Avenue fairly soon. McDonald's has ROW issue with Eversource. Wendy's is closed and will be knocked down and rebuilt.

Mr. Poland stated that he will have update on Parking at next meeting.

Mr. Goman stated that he has tried speaking with Shawn (Wintonbury Mall Owner) and did invite him to a New York show, which is December 1, 2, and 3rd, he did reply yes, but Mr. Goman stated that he emailed Shawn and has not heard back.

Mr. Giner stated that he met with the vendor of the website Virtual Town Hall and is looking to go live in November. The webpage will have a page where you can choose to receive an agenda as well as minutes of all Meetings.

Commissioner Bononi asked what the intended purpose of the poster was in the Town Hall Lobby. Mr. Driver stated that it is for people to contact Goman & York. Commissioner Bononi stated that it should be used in other places such as, Library or the High School.

Mr. Goman stated that he is working with Bob Schwartz, on the possibility of Cumberland Farms located in the old Hardware Store. Cumberland Farms has ruled out a couple other sites and is interested in the Bloomfield site because of the traffic. Mr. Goman stated that Cumberland Farms does a good job as an operator of a convenience store.

Ms. Bononi stated that it would be greatly needed once apartments go in.

Commissioner Hesketh expressed concern regarding traffic in the intersection if Cumberland Farms comes into Town.

Commissioner Bercowetz asked if there are concerns with gas stations near water sources. Mr. Goman stated that that it is a little premature right now, wait to see what happens with future conversations with Cumberland and Mr. Schwartz.

6. Staff and Commission Member Updates on Various Topic of Interest

a. Tax Abatement Policy

Mr. Giner presented the Commission with a rough draft of the Tax Abatement policy. Mr. Giner stated that it is based on the Town of Windsor's policy because they have a robust

policy and Windsor is perceived as Bloomfield's biggest competition in attracting quality development.

Mr. Giner stated that percentages could be added to the base abatement percentages if certain incentive criteria are met such as, living wage, hiring locally, hiring minorities, etc. Mr. Giner suggested that the EDC should focus on page 4, adjustment to the abatement schedule. Mr. Giner further stated that the EDC can discuss further the types of incentives that may be appropriate to meet Town goals. The draft also includes language where if a company were to terminate the business before a certain date or otherwise default on an agreement they would have to pay all abated taxes back. This would be secured by filing the agreement on the land records.

Mr. Driver stated that it's good to compare abatements with Windsor because it is the most competitive with Bloomfield and Bloomfield needs to be better. Mr. Driver stated that the State of Connecticut gives big loans and if a business meets the thresholds then the loans turn into grants. There was further discussion on the type of businesses Bloomfield wants to attract.

Mr. Schenck stated that Bloomfield has a diverse community, lifestyle and interest. The best policy is to have public meetings or neighborhood meetings rather than have something that is structured and automatic. Mr. Schenck stated that there was a formal policy adopted in the past that has been used, and the proposed draft should take into account this diversity and allow for public hearing. Mr. Schenck also stated that what needs to be addressed is how you provide for diverse opinions in a public venue, which gives the Council a better view of how the Community feels.

Commissioner Bononi stated that what Mr. Schenck is saying happens in a lot of communities. For example, if one proposed a big project, an advance team would go out into the community and speak with homeowner associations, social organizations, they really got the feel of the community whether or not a project was suitable for the community. Commissioner Bononi stated that Bloomfield has to be thorough and completely realistic with the Tax Abatement. She questioned if Bloomfield wants to give away the store like Windsor. She believes that Bloomfield needs to do something special with the Tax Abatement. Commissioner Bononi stated that the Tax Abatement is silent as to prohibited uses such as, recycling, bio-hazard, and waste storage plants.

Commissioner Hesketh stated that TPZ and Land Use Committees are in place to determine whether a business is suitable for Bloomfield and he trusts TPZ to make those types of land use decisions.

Mr. Giner stated that the Town Council would still make the ultimate decision to approve or modify with the advice of the EDC, the Town Manager, and Town Staff. There was further discussion of the Tax Abatement.

Chairman Long stated that minority workers have to be taken into consideration in the abatement policy. Mr. Giner stated that as part of the incentive package, minority participation incentives could be added. Mr. Poland stated that the EDC must be clear on definition. There was further discussion on definition of minority workforce and how to make Bloomfield's Tax Abatement more attractive than Windsor's.

b. New and ongoing construction

Mr. Giner stated that staff had been in discussions with representatives of a large development that could bring in a possible 700 jobs. He also stated that a Pest Control

Company was interested in (Lot 1) at Phoenix Crossing. A Construction company with approximately 200 employees was also asking about incentives to locate in Bloomfield. He noted Nature's Grocery Store looking for locations to bake and sell products with possible restaurant space. He stated that Calamar is proposing a 140 unit elderly apartment complex and will be going before IWWC & TPZ in November. Regan Development is before Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission and the Town Plan and Zoning Commission this month hoping for approvals for a 38 unit apartment building at the former VALCO site on Cottage Grove Road. .

c. Wintonbury Mall

Nothing new to report.

d. Filley Park

Issue resolved with Army Corps, Nothing new to report

e. Other Topics

Mr. Giner noted that there will be holiday lights festival on the Town Green on the evening of December 1st.

f. Mr. Giner handed out a draft Schedule of Meetings for 2017

7. Public Comment

None

8. Adjournment

Commissioner Bercowetz made a motion to adjourn at 10:30 a.m. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Katrichis and passed unanimously.