Chair: Bonnie Bercowetz, Vice Chair Michelle Bononi, Bob Firger, Lenny Hudgen, Jerry Katrichis, Steve Zelman and Siddiq Abdullah were all present.

Absent: Martin Geitz (excused) and Nyandah Robinson (unexcused).

Also present: Mr. Robert Smith, Town Manager, Mr. Phil Schenck, former Town Manager, Mr. Michael Goman of Goman + York, Mr. David Driver of Goman + York, Ms. Denise Robidoux of Goman + York, Dr. Don Poland, Town Councilman David Mann, Town Councilman Kevin Gough and the Director of Planning & Economic Development, Mr. José Giner.

1. Call to Order:
   Chair Bercowetz called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

2. Roll Call:
   A Quorum was established with 7 voting members.

3. Consent Agenda:
   a. Monthly Written Report (Consultant)
   b. Monthly Written Report (Staff)

   Commissioner Firger made a motion to approve the consent agenda, Commissioner Abdullah seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda.

4. Minutes:
   a. September 10, 2019

   Commissioner Firger made a motion to approve the September 10, 2019 minutes. Commissioner Abdullah seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the September 10, 2019 minutes.

5. Public Comments: None

   Chair Bercowetz asked if there were questions from the public. The public did not have any questions.

6. Old Business:
   a. EDC Standing Committee on Ordinances:

   Vice Chair Bononi and Dr. Don Poland will have documentation to present to the EDC in the November 12, 2019 meeting.
b. Public Art and Other Initiatives to attract visitors:

Commissioner Firger stated he welcomed any and all comments from anyone concerning this matter. He stated that he would be interested in an inventory of active artist their art work, anyone running art workshops, doing art in their backyards, art teachers and art students. He questioned how one finds out who is out there. He used the September Newsletter for Bloomfield as an example of the difficulty in communicating highlighted art. On page six (6) was the advertisement for family paint night. He stated it would be the kind of thing that would be attractive if it was properly publicized. Paint night publicized properly would attract more people plus it might draw people to patronize the restaurants and other businesses in the area. He also stated an item this big is on page six (6) of the newsletter. He also stated that it is extremely important to find a way to publicize the future art activities in the Town of Bloomfield for the Town’s residential community and the surrounding communities. Commissioner Firger wants to do an inventory of the artist in the area and surrounding areas, plus find a way to publicize the findings.

Commissioner Hudgen stated he has participated in Blue Back Square in West Hartford events of this nature. He feels it’s pretty effective. When he attends he frequent restaurants and businesses in the area. He has attended several art events in that area. He recommend getting a store front to house artist, their art and art events.

Commissioner Abdullah stated he’s in favor of the idea. He likes the idea of bring people into the Town to utilize the businesses in the area. He thinks it is a great idea.

Commissioner Zelman stated he was looking in the paper and he saw some grants going to schools. The Town should collaborate with the locate schools. It’s important that other towns know what is in Bloomfield. Getting the inventory of what the Town has is a great start.

Mr. Giner noted that he saw a story on local drum lines which perform separate from the bands. This would be another attraction for the Town that would get more young people involved and interested.

Commissioner Katrichis stated he likes all of the ideas.

Chair Bercowetz stated it is important to hire a full time public relations person.

Mr. Mann stated the present advertising isn’t working, therefore he recommend mailing the information to everyone’s house. He stated it’s a great way to get the word out into the community. And Ms. Robidoux stated the Yankee Flier would be another way to get the word out into the community.

Chair Bercowetz stated it all comes back to who will do the advertising. Money must be spent in order to make money. Chair Bercowetz recommend hiring a public relations person. She stated it doesn’t have to be a staff position it could be an outside coordinator. She feels it should
be a full time position and it should be someone that is just in charge of advertising the events in Town so people will know about them.

Commissioner Firger stated he would like to see the Town’s website improved. He mentioned UHART’s annual events and the classes that do their web development. He recommend creating internships and getting interns to modernize the Town’s Website. He also recommend hiring a public relations coordinator for the Town.

Commission Abdullah recommend finding someone to write the job description for the Town’s Public Relations Event Coordinator.

Ms. Robidoux stated she will write a draft job description for the Town’s Public Relations Event Coordinator. She will review the material the surrounding towns have and bring examples. One example would be the annual Oktoberfest the Town of Enfield has each year. Ms. Robidoux also recommend looking at the Library way of advertising events since they are constantly running art programs.

The senior center was also recommended in looking at their way of advertising events and getting people to respond.

Mr. Mann stated that there is a need for a job description. He stated that we need a “Pied Piper” to help publicize events.

Ms. Robidoux stated that it can be done with a 20 hour/week job. She recommend getting the millennial generation involved.

Commissioner Firger suggested that we may be able to find someone in Bloomfield who is retired and could do this on a part-time basis.

Commissioner Katrichis stated that interns will need a professional to oversee and guide them.

Mr. Giner recommend the information be included and turned around by January 10, 2020 to meet the demands of the Budget timeline. He stated next week is the Southern New England Planning Association event. He stated that he signed up for a mobile workshop on the impact of public art on the locate economy, planning and how it connects. He will bring information and pictures back for the Commission from that event.

Chair Bercowitz stated these events are things you cannot do on the internet and young people are looking to get involved with them.

Commissioner Firger stated he will research cataloging/inventorying people that may have art or artist skills and he will also involve those retired.
7. Discussion re: Draft Complete Streets Report and Policy

Mr. Giner stated there is a draft report for the Commission to review. He stated there are many Towns that have adopted a policy. The closest one is West Hartford and it is the most successful one and it has gotten recognition from the Complete Streets Organization nationwide. He believes you can use the policy to prioritize projects that are already being proposed in the budget. The key is not to try to accomplish everything at once but set priorities to follow.

Chair Bercowetz asked would this process be a way of finding funds. Mr. Giner answered yes. He used Hartford as an example, they did a project that stopped at Bloomfield’s Town line. Bloomfield was able to get grant money to continue the project on the Bloomfield side. He feels having a policy and a plan in place that has been adopted will get projects funded faster when money becomes available.

Commissioner Abdullah stated he read the documentation and he was impressed. He also stated it was a well done proposal and all of his questions were answered. His concern is implementing the policy. He stated there a big part that was missing is the dollar values.

Commissioner Zelman stated it is a great tool to have in the bucket. This process will give leverage on projects that are already being considered for implementation.

Commissioner Firger stated doing the plan at once would be too much. He stated that there was no requirement to do it all at once. An incremental approach is important and working on one project at a time is key. If that route is taken you will not have to complete the whole project at once but it can be completed in increments.

Commissioner Katrichis state that would be his concern but he agrees with the idea of spreading spending out.

Vice Chair Bononi stated she would propose, in response to the documentation/policy presented to this Commission, steps to be taken, not necessarily in this order as follows: 1) ask the DPW director for an Infrastructure plan in regards to the prioritized item to be done, 2) hire a traffic engineer to review traffic issues, proposals and to advise the TPZ Commission which now do not have any traffic engineering advise other than an occasional engineering report from the Town’s Engineering Department, 3) hire a traffic consultant to perform a traffic study to address the problems the Town has, 4) update the Town of Bloomfield Ordinances, 5) install bike lane markings and pedestrian lane markings, 6) assess needs, propose construction be completed in one season, 8) apply “cost not to exceed” limitations on pricing, 9) reassess the sufficiency and availability of additional mass transit. She stated that the document constantly refers to the fact that the mass transit needs to be updated, improved and expanded, but it also states ridership does not justify the expansion.

Vice Chair Bononi stated she would totally junk the policy statement in favor of a simpler continuous improvement policy statement that proposes a pay as you go policy. Vice
Chair Bononi also states she objects to the policy document the most because there is a presumption of social engineering for which she wants no part of and the shell language is deterring. She feels it is a blank check to do whatever is stated in this policy. She also questioned who would interpret the policy and how will it fix all of the many problems that need to be addressed. It is an open invitation to sue the Town for not delivering on the services stated in the policy which are broad and exonerates responsibility from individuals. It is not the Town’s responsibility to provide an intermittent transportation point for every single person to pick and choose to go where they want, when they want and how they want. No one has ever promised anyone that and she doesn’t believe the Town should either. She stated the Town should only promise what they can deliver and they should only make promises they can keep. She asked, where the money come from. The Economic Development Commission has asked for specific improvements, particularly in the downtown area, and the Council was kind enough to increase the amount of moneys needed to improve the sidewalks which are in dangerous condition. In this document they are talking about blanket expenses. She asked where is this all coming from. The language in this document presumes all these things shall be delivered when in fact they do not have a hope of delivering. Where does capital improvement planning come into this picture? Vice Chair Bononi does not approve of this policy statement document. She will also provide all of her written reservations concerning this matter.

Chair Bercowetz agrees with Vice Chair Bononi on a number of points she presented to the Commission. She doesn’t feel the policy statement is bad. Chair Bercowetz sees the policy statement as a philosophy of the kind of improvement they would like to provide. She doesn’t see it as a requirement. She agrees that what the policy statement is asking to approve, they won’t do. She also feels some of the language in the document is wrong for this particular Town. She agrees it has some social engineering but that’s how taxation and public works to try and provide a certain lifestyle. Chair Bercowetz asked Mr. Giner was he asking the Commission to approve the draft?

Mr. Giner stated if there are changes or technical questions now is the time to say so, the consultant can revise it before the final draft goes to the Council. Mr. Giner also stated, the Commission can choose to provide a unified recommendation to send to the Council or it can be left to individual members to comment and sent them up to the Council for discussion and a vote.

Vice Chair Bononi stated within the confines of this proposal, how it was priced and then accepted is there anything built into the contract or cause? Mr. Giner stated sixty-five (65). Vice Chair Bononi asked sixty-five thousand dollars ($65,000.00)? What type of changes are built into that if they asked for changes to be made to this document? Mr. Giner stated that it depends on the extent of the changes. At this point it’s just comments to return back to the consultant.

There was in-depth conversation concerning this matter. Eventually Chair Bercowetz asked Mr. Giner what is the turnaround time on this document? Mr. Giner stated there was no
set turnaround but that it would be helpful to have a policy in places during budget review. Vice Chair Bononi stated the changes should reflect the Town of Bloomfield.

Commissioner Abdullah stated the project should not be approved until the Commission’s changes are made to the documentation. He stated the consultants should be invited to come and address the concerns of the Commission, make revisions to the documentation to reflect The Town of Bloomfield.

Mr. Robert Smith, Town Manager stated the reason why the consultants start with the broader base from the public is because they know that they are going to hear a very diverse set of input from the public and from others at large. They bring an organized distilled set to that area’s information forward as they move up the leadership hierarchy to structure the administration. There is a reason why they do their homework within the community before they come before the Commission. And that is a natural progress. The tasking of the consultants are coming through a different channel. You have the Council and staff tasking the consultants with doing the broad base investigation and then bring the best thoughts they come up with to the Commission for input. Mr. Smith agrees with Mr. Giner that this form of proceeding is a natural process for planning and creating a report like the one before the Commission today. And it is not a done deal. They truly want everyone’s opinion and input in the process and he’s certain that if this group has changes that they want to provide to the consultants they will willingly accept them and do their best to incorporate the changes into the documentation.

Mr. Giner recommend having a joint meeting with the consultants and all parties involved make necessary changes to the document at one time. He stated having several subcommittee meetings will incur additional expenses but one unified meeting would be a better route to take concerning this matter.

Vice Chair Bononi asked Mr. Giner where would their recommendations go and Mr. Giner stated comments would be submitted to the consultants and recommendations would be submitted to the Council before the policy is adopted.

Vice Chair Bononi stated moving forward would require asking the consultants to except additional changes to the policy statement and see what their response is concerning this matter. They would expect it to be covered under the contract and they will try to be reasonable about it. But they are looking for reasonable changes that are reflective to the Economic Development of the Town of Bloomfield.

The Commission was in agreement to have all changes sent to Mr. Giner to be forwarded to the consultants. And Mr. Giner will bring documentation concerning this matter back to the Commission in the November meeting.

Mr. Kevin Gough stated he does not want this coming before him without the recommendations of the EDC and other groups. If there is a split and diverse opinion he doesn’t
mind having a majority and a minority report. Mr. Gough wants feedback and he thinks public input is great.

Chair Bercowetz stated the Commission needs a policy for who comes before them. She asked if Vice Chair Bononi would draft a document to be presented to the board at the next meeting and Vice Chair Bononi agreed to provide a draft document.

Vice Chair Bononi made a motion to have the Commission’s comments addressed in a draft document and Commissioner Firger seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to have the Commission’s comments addressed in a draft document approved.

Vice Chair Bononi made a motion to amend the motion to have the Commission’s comments addressed within the confines of the existing contract and Commissioner Zelman seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to have their comments addressed within the confines of the existing document.

8. **New Business: None**

9. **Commission Member updates:**

   Chair Bercowetz asked for an update on Alexander Manor. Mr. Giner stated that he had a recent meeting with the architect. Unfortunately, Mr. Giner thinks the hotel is off the table. Their current plan is to renovate the existing building into apartments. They see the hotel in the front and apartments in the back as risky in terms of financing. Their own studies have shown the numbers do not support a hotel at this time at that location. They will create a 41 to 43 unit apartments by renovating the interior of the existing building. Their initial concept was to create the hotel in the front, dig into the hill and create 50+ apartments in the back.

   Chair Bercowetz asked if they are short term or long term rentals. Mr. Giner stated they may be both. The Town was welcoming a hotel because it is a perceived necessity. People that need hotel rooms have to go elsewhere. The owners were discussing setting aside some short-term rooms for executives that maybe staying in the Town a little longer.

   Commissioner Firger stated that the vacant site of the former Ruby Tuesday Restaurant was an important Gateway location and suggested that the Town take a proactive role in trying to get a Trader Joe’s retail store to come to Town. Mike Goman stated that he would talk to Benderson Development to see what the status of the plaza is.

10. **Public Comments:**

   Mr. Mann and Mr. Gough had comments and concerns about sidewalks and the perceived over building of medical urgent care facilities. Vice Chair Bononi and Commissioner Zelman had concerns with the Blight Ordinances.
Mr. Mann stated that he thought that the Design Review Board was doing a good job and suggested that at some point we should consider expanding its jurisdiction to all business districts.

Mr. Gough commented on staffing. He said he sees the needs but he also would like to see a policy to avoid just adding new positions. He feels there should be some subtraction also. With respect to the “social engineering” comments earlier he stated that people don’t have choices now. There were broader philosophical issues that needed to be discussed.

11. **Staff Reports:**

   a. **Town Project updates:**

   Mr. Giner provided a Town project update for the Commission.

   **TIF Study Progress**

   Mr. Giner stated he is waiting on the choosing of the Law firm who would conduct the initial work and will provide an update at the next meeting. There was also dialogue from Mr. Goman and Mr. Mann.

12. **EDC Consultant Reports (Goman & York):**

   a. **Additional Reporting and Information:**

   The Goman & York Key Initiatives Updates were included in the package given to the EDC at the meeting, it included Town Hall attendance, business outreach and development, economic development strategy and Bloomfield site inventory and project updates.

13. **Adjournment:**

   Vice Chair Bononi made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Abdullah seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

   **NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, November 12, 2019