BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

There was a regular meeting of the above referenced subcommittee held on Tuesday, December 21, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom remote meeting.

Committee Members present were: Councilors Anthony Harrington, Chair, Rickford Kirton, Kenneth McClary and C.F. Politis

Also present were: Stanley D. Hawthorne, Town Manager, Jose Giner, Director of Planning and Economic Development and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council

Guest: Michael Goman, Goman & York Economic Development Consultants

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Old Business

Presentation and Discussion by Goman & York regarding Economic Development Authorities

Mr. Michael Goman, Goman & York Economic Development Consultants presented a proposal to establish a Business Development Authority.

TYPES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES

Public (Governmental) – Economic/Business Development Authority

Best suited for: Facilitating strategic redevelopment which requires municipal funding or support to succeed, carrying out long-term initiatives associated with land use planning.

Capabilities: Can condemn, buy and sell real estate, issue bonds and enter contracts; utilize TIF funding; raise funds from real estate contracts, leases and sales to fund projects, manage funds on behalf of the municipality.

Economic Development Committee

Best suited for: Voluntary body, advising local governing body on topics associated with economic development in the community; serving as a subject matter expert on issues concerning business and community economic health.

Public-Private Partnership

Capabilities – Business Improvement Districts are geographically, defined and receive property tax dollars from a special assessment on taxable properties within their district to fund operations.
Non-Profit Examples – Downtown organizations, Chamber of Commerce, community foundations, art councils and event sponsoring organizations.

Capabilities – can accept grant funding and after tax advantages to donors.

Benefits of Development Authorities

- Exist outside the regular structure of government.
- Avoid many of the requirements and controls imposed on government agencies.
- Respond to opportunities faster and more efficiently than a comparable government agency
- Maintain a higher degree of oversight and accountability than pure private-sector approach

Estimate of Initial Cost to Establish a Development Authority

- Legal expenses - $30,000
- Staff/Consulting Time
- Accounting
- Recording Tax Filing

Projected Annual Operating Statement for a Development Authority Revenue

- Fees from projects, received from grants, tax credit contributions and allocation from Council

Mission Statement and Possible Activities of Municipal Development Authorities

Discussion

Councilor Kirton requested a mockup table of current Town Center projects and an analysis of how the development of Business Development authorities interact with the model of Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

- Timeline to begin the process if the Council is in agreement, approximately 4-6 months.
- $6M value of Wintonbury Mall by owner research, may be appealing with other developers, possible partnership with the Town.
- Town obtaining control of the property with option to purchase or buy outright.

Councilor McClary asked if the Town decides to take the property for the benefit and purpose of redevelopment, would the Town violate the 5th Amendment clause and be at risk. There was a brief discussion about the process of Eminent Domain. Mr. Goman noted that the Town would need to have a specific plan for higher and better use of the property for the Town. The Town would have to demonstrate that the property is not adding anything to the Town or is detrimental to the success of the overall community.

Mr. McClary also asked if the property is marketed to the “free market” and the Town decides to partner with a developer, what is the responsibility of the Town to handle the “bid ask gap”, which is the difference between the
seller’s value of the property and “free market” value. The town can assist to close gap using the Business Development Authority or utilize TIF as another tool.

Councilor Merritt suggested setting up a Business Development Authority for projects in mind or should the Town just setup it up anyway. Mr. Goman recommended to set up the Business Development Authority as soon as possible to be ready for potential projects and Economic Development opportunities.

Councilor Kirton asked for an explanation of why the Town would invest $6M into Wintonbury Mall? He noted that he is not a big fan of Eminent Domain. Councilor Kirton stated that the best approach is to entice investors who are willing to invest in the community.

Councilor Politis noted that the Town needs to move forward as quickly as possible and look at other areas and strip malls to consider as well.

Councilor McClary commented on the best solutions/alternatives to assist with closing free market gap, any current tools the Town has would be beneficial to overall redevelopment. TIF can be used to spur redevelopment, in order to purchase this property, the Town would have to bond funds. Councilor McClary requested a cost estimate and final proposal of the setup for the Business Development Authority.

Public Comment

1. **Steven Zelman, Economic Development Commission (EDC) member** noted that the Business Development Authority is just another tool in the Town’s toolbox for potential developers and allows the for more economic growth.

2. **Bonnie Bercowetz, Chair of EDC** stated that gaining control of this property as quickly as possible is very important. She reminded the group that you have to spend money in order to make money. The Town must identify and resolve issues with economic disparity in certain sections of the community.

3. **Robert Firger, EDC member** strongly advised the Town to move this forward with the setup of a Business Development Authority, which is very valuable in many ways. There are other places in Town that could benefit with this redevelopment tool. As a Commercial Attorney, he described the legal process to execute Eminent Domain, if necessary. He also noted that since Kelo case in New London, 45 states have authorized Eminent domain laws.

It was moved by Councilor Kirton, seconded by Councilor Politis and voted unanimously to recommend the setup of a Business Development Authority to the full Town Council with a presentation by Goman & York Economic Development Consultants at the next Council meeting scheduled for January 10, 2022.

**Discussion on the next steps to promote development in the recently adopted Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts**

Councilor Politis inquired about any recommendations on how to advertise and marketing strategies for TIF Districts.
Mr. Goman noted that his team has been marketing all three TIF districts for the Town of Bloomfield. The overview marketing document has been completed. He stated that he will provide an updated list and present at the next subcommittee meeting scheduled for January 18, 2022.

Councilor Kirton noted that Council will need to make a decision to finance and identify staffing as we go through the budget process.

Councilor Merritt asked if the Town can adjust the scope of services with Goman & York to include more marketing.

Mr. Stanley Hawthorne, Town Manager gave a brief overview of the FY 23 budget process and areas of government that can be improved upon. He noted the introduction of a new budget modification tool, to identify priorities to address overall community needs. He is in full support of the development of a Business Development Authority as well as its interaction with the TIF districts.

Councilor Merritt asked about bond referendum options and cost required to setup the Business Development Authority. Mr. Goman stated that the Town can begin marketing promotional activity of a Business Development Authority. Councilor Merritt suggested an investment of $100,000 in FY 23 budget to begin this process.

Councilor Politis noted that the Council will have some tough decisions to make in the upcoming FY 23 budget process. He stated that allocating funding for a Business Development Authority will demonstrate commitment and return on investment.

**Discussion and Possible Action on Council Referred Item FY 19/20-12: Request for Easement across LaSalette Park between Ryefield Hollow North and Ryefield Hollow South**

It was moved by Councilor Merritt, seconded by Councilor McClary to table this agenda item for further discussion and information gathering.

VOTE: 
AYE: J. Merritt, C.F. Politis, K. McClary, T. Harrington
NAY: None
ABSTAIN: R. Kirton

The motion passes, 4-0-1.

There ensued a discussion regarding the TPZ approval of the Master Plan with a contingency to obtain the necessary easements from the Town Council. Subcommittee members discussed the need for an easement, resident concerns and potential environmental issues.

It was noted that several subcommittee members stated that more information is needed prior to making a full recommendation to the Council for final approval.
New Business

Discussion regarding priorities for 2022

Mr. Jose Giner, Director of Planning and Economic Development suggested an informal discussion to identify priorities for 2022. At this time, there were no action items for discussion. This item will be placed on the agenda for future subcommittee meetings.

Staff Reports
Development Inquiries and Project Updates

- Cannabis Manufacturing – many inquiries regarding recreational marijuana grow, retail or hybrid operations in Town. The Town is allowed 1 retail and 1 hybrid operation based on population size. There is a moratorium on TPZ applications at this time for any cannabis operations.

- Phase III – Town Center Apartments – awaiting approval for Inland/Wetlands permit and Design Review Board recommendation before the next TPZ meeting. The developer requested a zone change to allow parking on Jerome Avenue Extension. Once the third phase is completed, there will be over 400 residential units in the Town Center apartments’ project.

- Woodland Avenue – land parcel for sale across from Deringer Ney.

Mr. Hawthorne briefly updated the subcommittee on the following action items:

- 2022 Plan of Conservation and Development Update – TPZ will drive the process by charter (statutory requirements and Town Council will guide the strategic visioning of the community. This is an opportunity to combine both entities and make this process more efficient for all stakeholders involved.

- Director of Planning & Economic Development – hiring process is underway, applications closed December 21, 2021 and interviewing will begin in the first week of January.

Discussion

Councilor Merritt asked what Council subcommittee receives monthly status reports and updates from the Library Building Committee. He also inquired about discussions involved flood control and runoff issues in the Town Center (new apartments, Town Hall and library).

Mr. Giner stated that Mr. Jonathan Thiesse, Town Engineer has been reviewing drainage issues at that site. Councilor McClary also noted that the MDC looking at outflows into Wash Brook and pollution of waterways relative to mitigation efforts. He also asked about the plan and timeline for the RFQ proposal for a POCD consultant. There is a total of $60,000 allocated to fund this proposal. Mr. Giner noted that some of preliminary work has been completed with the Complete Streets process regarding the transportation component.
Other Business

There were no other business items for discussion.

Public Comments

1. **Anthony Maulucci** expressed his frustration in not being able to voice his concerns during the discussion of the Ryefield Hollow Drive easement agenda item. He noted that this easement has been approved twice during the TPZ process. He has been waiting patiently for 2 years for Town’s response and final action regarding this easement. He stated that the small easement is needed for emergency fire access and utilities. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission granted a conditional Master Plan approval of 51 unit development that is contingent on obtaining the necessary easements from the Town Council.

   Mr. Maulucci stated that his family has been good stewards to the Town, donating 35 acres to the Town for the LaSalette Park property.

   He requested a Special Meeting of the Land Use & Economic Development subcommittee for a vote to recommend to the full Town Council for final approval of this easement.

2. **Paula Jones, 5 Bear Ridge Drive** commented on the Ryefield Hollow easement issues. (See attached) She asked the subcommittee members to research and review all facts of this case before a final decision is made. She also expressed concerns regarding the conservation of land and replanting of trees and construction debris clean-up.

Discussion

Councilor McClary stated that he was not aware that Mr. Maulucci he was supposed to present any information at this meeting. He expressed his dismay with town staff in making a recommendation to grant this easement without hearing resident concerns.

Mr. Giner noted that the TPZ held a public hearing and all abutters were notified by mail.

Mr. Maulucci noted that this project is not contingent on this easement. This easement is only for emergency vehicle access for MDC and Fire Marshal.

Councilor Kirton noted that staff did attempt to acknowledge Mr. Maulucci to present new information to present regarding the Ryefield Hollow Drive easement at the start of the agenda item earlier in the meeting.

Other public comments were noted through the course of the meeting on various topics.

Approval of Minutes
The minutes from the last subcommittee meeting held on October 19, 2021 will remain in draft form, due to the change in Council leadership from the November 8, 2021 elections.

**Adjournment**

It was moved by Councilor McClary, seconded by Councilor Merritt and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m.