Chair: Bonnie Bercowetz

Vice Chair: Jerry Katrichis, Commissioner Bob Firger, Commissioner Steve Zelman, Commissioner Siddiq Abdullah, Commissioner Stephen R. Vaughan, and Commissioner Tyrikah Williams were all present for this meeting.

Absent: Commissioner Lenny Hudgen and Commissioner Nyandah Robinson

Also present: Mr. Stanley Hawthorne, Town Manager, Mr. Micheal Goman, and Mrs. Denise Robidoux of Goman + York, and Mr. Jose Giner, former Director of Planning and Economic Development.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

Chair Bercowetz called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. The quorum was established with 7 members.

2. Approval of Minutes:

a. March 8, 2022

Commissioner Katrichis made a motion to approve the March 8, 2022 meeting minutes as amended and Commissioner Zellman seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the motion as amended.

3. New Business:


Mr. Ryan Fraser is the owner of the Landlord Vision Real Estate Partners. Mr. Fraser was at this meeting working with Greenway Products & Services, LLC, and he was also here to answer questions the Commission had concerning this matter.

Mr. Dominick Davi, General Manager of Campus Greenway, and Mr. Tony Fabrizio, a Manager of Kamps Greenway, both from Greenway Products & Services, LLC, located at 14 Home News Row, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-3602, were here to pitch the proposal.

Mr. Davi stated their company’s name is Kamps Greenway, they were purchased by Kamps Pallets which is a national pallet company. They were interested in the building located at 390 Woodland Avenue, Bloomfield. The company would like to create another pallet company at that location. Mr. Davi informed the Commission that before they were purchased by Kamps, they had five (5) other locations and they are also presently opening up sites for the company. Mr. Davi stated they are the largest pallet recycle manufacturer in the region. The operation consist of receiving pallets, either broken boards or creating new boards, after which, the company ships the product to warehouses, distribution centers and manufactures; basically they ship to places that need pallets. Another part of their operation is dismantling the unusable pallets, they cut them to the size needed and make a remanufactured pallet. The company has been doing business for over thirty (30) years, they have two hundred and seventy (270) employees, they had five (5) locations, however being part of Kamps they now have forty-nine (49) locations.

Commission Questions:

Chair Bercowetz asked Mr. Davi how many people would be employed at the 390 Woodland Avenue location, and what were the skill sets? Mr. Davi answered thirty (30) to forty (40) employees to begin, they’ll need drivers, mechanics, office people, and they’ll also need laborers. He stated they also put automation in their companies, however the automation doesn’t get rid of people, it makes their job easier, faster, and more ergonomic. He stated, there will be a repair line, no one will be lifting heavy product, and the automation gives them an opportunity to process more.

Chair Bercowetz asked the value of the equipment the company will be installing? Mr. Davi answered, one million dollars (1m), however with the additions of the trailers it will be more. Chair Bercowetz asked how many trucks will be coming in and out, and how many shifts will the company run? Mr. Davi answered, they’ll have one shift, if business increases they’ll add a second shift. The business will be handled by four (4) to five (5) tractors, the trailers are not located there, because they’ll be dropped off at all of the customers locations. He stated it’s a drop and pick operation, it will be about twenty (20) to thirty (30) trailers going in and out per day. Chair Bercowetz asked what time would the hours be for the first shift? Mr. Davis answered, the first shift hours will be from 6:30 a.m., until 3:30
p.m., and a 12 noon until 4:00 p.m. Chair Bercowetz asked why were they interested in locating to Bloomfield? Mr. Davi stated Bloomfield is a perfect area for the company because through the national company that just purchased their company, they have a lot of business within a forty-five (45) minute radius of Bloomfield. Mr. Davi also stated their company do a lot of business with Amazon, Home Depot, Aldi, US Foods, Staples, and the company also has major grocery houses in that particular area, which makes it a perfect place for their business. Mr. Davi stated they opened up a Baltimore Maryland site last year. Chair Bercowetz asked would this one be the only one in the New England states? Mr. Davi answered yes, but they have one in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Sawmill, New York. Chair Bercowetz asked did their parent company have any in the region, he answered, yes.

Commissioner Zelman asked what were the geographic areas the company plan on servicing and how does the size of this proposed facility compare to the others, for example the three in New Jersey? Mr. Davi stated, the Connecticut facility will be bigger, because they are trying to do everything inside the building. He also stated they plan to service the entire state of Connecticut and a portion of Massachusetts.

Chair Bercowetz asked the size of the building, Mr. Davi stated its fifty-five thousand (55,000) square feet. Mr. Tony Fabrizio stated the two sites in New Jersey are fifty thousand (50,000) square feet each and the one in Baltimore Maryland is twenty-seven (27,000) square feet. Mr. Fabrizio stated they also have a smaller facility in New Jersey that’s ten thousand (10,000) square feet, and that facility strictly deals with rare pallets.

Commissioner Zelman asked with the larger facility can they accommodate more shifts? Mr. Davi stated they wanted a bigger facility in case they needed to add another shift but it will be one shift for awhile.

Commissioner Katrichis asked about the number of employees, Mr. Davi reiterated the material he gave concerning that matter earlier. Commissioner Abdullah was concerned about the tax revenue. Commissioner Williams was concerned with the pollution output. Commissioner Firger asked about expanding. Commissioner Vaughan was interested in the hiring process being diverse. There was tax informations given by Mr. Goman, and he gave an update on his conversation with the Wintonbury Mall owner. Mr. Giner asked about outside storage. Mr. Dominick Davi, and Mr. Tony Fabrizio answered all questions satisfactorily.

Commissioner Zelman made a motion in favor of the recommendations concerning the New Brunswick, NJ – Greenway Products & Services Manufactures and refurbishes wooden pallets, https://greenwaypsllc.com. They would like to establish a Northeast operation. Commissioner Abdullah seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Mr. Hawthorne was pressed for time, therefore he made comments before leaving the meeting. He stated the Town is in an exciting time, and he also commented on the budget modifications. He stated the Town Council was looking forward to a tentatively approved, and continuing to address economic development as a top priority such as the number of positions needed, Wintonbury Mall and the other areas in the Town Center. Also a priority was the redevelopment authority, a few weeks ago the Town Council instructed them to move ahead with forming the development authority. The funds were appropriated before they discuss the budget to create the legal foundation for the redevelopment authority. Therefore they started that process, however the goal of the Town Council was to get it created from a legal perspective in order to be up and moving by July 1, 2022. They have also tentatively approved funding for the development authority starting to operate, facilitating and coordinating. He stated there would need to be a person representing the development authority, therefore they started meeting staff, including Goman + York and the Town’s Attorney. Mr. Hawthorne learned in there last meeting the precursor or predecessor to the economic development commission being formed were previous redevelopment authority that were created, possibly under a different name. From the staff’s prospective that group was not presented to the Town Council yet. They will probably want that governing route to be as a political as possible. As he continues his work he’ll return to the Commission with more prospective in the matter. Mr. Hawthorne stated Mr. Giner continues to be very valuable to the Town. Mr. Giner has been helping Ms. Rodriguez transition, and his budget was favorably viewed by the Town Council. He also stated everything Mr. Giner requested or recommended was tentatively approved by the Town Council and he named what was approved. They approved one position which was to give the director administrative support. And the building department had a couple of positions approved. Mr. Hawthorne continue with the job Goman + York was doing, and there were no questions from the commission for him. He also discussed his conversation he had with the owner of the Wintonbury Mall. The Commission was pleased with the progress Mr. Hawthorne has made during his short period with the Town.
4. Old Business:

   a. TIF Use Priorities:

   The EDC Chair, the Commissioners, Mr. Giner and Ms. Rodriguez agreed with Mr. Poland’s recommendations set forth in his letter and they agreed with his comments made during this meeting. Mr. Giner recommended the Commission create a memo incorporating Mr. Poland’s recommendations in it and submit it to the Council. The Commission voted and the motion was approved.

   At the last meeting Mr. Don Poland provided a document entitled TIF District Priorities for Bloomfield, CT, prepared January 31, 2022. The document stated Mr. Poland recognize the desire of the community to provide a specific list of “acceptable TIF uses,” he felt the need to discourage the community from doing that and he listed three reasons why. Mr. Poland also stated on the document, predetermine uses, assumes they know and understand the future needs, wants and wishes of the community. He stated more importantly, it assumes they know the future market conditions and the objectives of the TIF District Plan. He provided a list of the TIF Plan explained. Mr. Poland also stated when reviewing requests for TIF, the reviewing agencies and decision-making bodies, should consider the Plan of Conservation and Development and Bloomfield Center Plan to determine the proposed development forwards the Town’s vision for these specific TIF areas. In addition, the proposal should be tested against the TIF Plan objectives, note in the letter and determination should be made regarding the proposed development and if said development forward the objective TIF.

   In conclusion, he stated if the Commission feel the need to establish some type of priorities, he included in the letter the framework for those priorities. He stated new construction will create the greatest increase in taxes and the greatest increase in the increment. Redevelopment of existing building suffering from functional obsolescence, deterioration, blighted conditions. Mix-use which include both commercial and residential, multi-family residential, commercial office, industrial, retail, service, full service restaurants and restaurants with a liquor permit. Ultimately its not suppose to say that new construction is a greater priority than redevelopment. He used Wintonbury Mall as an example. He stated it gives a framework for thinking about what the Town wants and how it can consider it. The three TIF Districts are very different areas and the wants, needs and desire maybe different. Mr. Poland stated it’s the merits of the application put forth before this Commission that should be considered, and whether or not the Town wants to participate in that application to achieve that development.

   b. Coordination with Council, Land Use & Economic Development Subcommittee:

   Mrs. Robidoux will let the EDC Commission know in advance if their input is needed in the subcommittee meetings. Meanwhile Goman + York will continue to attend the meetings. The information Goman + York provides or collects during the subcommittee meetings are provided in their monthly reports to the EDC.

5. Commission Member Updates:

   a. Arts Council – Commissioner Bob Firger:

   Commissioner Firger reiterated his information from the March meeting: The Commission met four times, they have two projects in process in Bloomfield. One of the projects is the indigenous art project which has been authorized and it is getting federal funding as well as local funding. And it will be going forward in the Spring. The second is the program for art in electric vehicle spaces, they received a report on it. It will be moving ahead, hopefully with the coordination of other communities. He also stated the electric vehicle space has been getting attention from other towns.

   Commissioner Firger stated one of the Arts Commission members is leaving, he spoke with people at Duncaster, and they are interested in having someone on the Arts Commission that positive. He encouraged Duncaster to be part of the active community. Commissioner Firger asked the Commission to let him know if they knew anyone interested in serving on the Arts Commission.

   Commissioner Firger also stated at the Arts Commission they are drafting a public comment policy, which came from the public dialogue that’s going on at the Library in book level nationally. Its about community members wanting to speak up and censor books in Libraries. He stated they are sensitive at the Arts Commission that it could come up when they start doing large public projects at the new Library. Commissioner Firger stated they are drafting in advance a policy entertaining public comments, but also establishing what their approach will be in listening to the comments, and not necessarily being subject to censorship. He stated art is exceptionally vulnerable to that, he will report back to the Commission concerning that matter, because it’s a general interest public even if they get into development authorities.
If people have the means to comment, but with a policy in advance that says someone is listening, but not necessarily going to follow any particular small group.

6. Public Comments: None

7. Staff Report:

Mr. Giner gave some information concerning this matter, and he also discussed cannabis growth, production, sales and applications. Commissioner Firger briefly gave some information about cannabis being decriminalized.

8. Town Projects updates:

a. POCD – a draft RFP is complete to hire consultant:

Ms. Rodriguez will have an update concerning this matter at the next meeting.

b. ARPAA – consultant hired, working on community survey to inform decision making:

Mr. Giner informed the Commission that a consultant was hired, Ms. Rodriguez will have an update concerning this matter at the next meeting.

c. Web Page Updates:

Ms. Robidoux has attended two meeting concerning this matter. However, she hadn’t received information concern the next meeting. She stated at the other meetings they were recommending what to do with economic development, in terms of making it easier to navigate through on the website.

d. Requested Budget Modifications Updates:

Mr. Giner provided a little insight into this matter.

9. EDC Consultant Report (Goman + York):

Goman + York provided their monthly report to the Commission for review.

10. Adjournment:

Commissioner Firger made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Vice Chair Katrichis seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:27 a.m.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday - May 10, 2022