Chair: Bonnie Bercowetz

Commissioner Bob Firger, Commissioner Steven Zelman, Commissioner Nyandah Robinson (last day serving on EDC), and Commissioner Tyrikah Williams were all present at this meeting.

Absent: Vice Chair: Jerry Katrichis, Commissioner Lenny Hudgen, Commissioner Siddiq Abdullah, Commissioner Stephen R. Vaughan

Also present: Ms. Jennifer Rodriguez, Director of Planning and Economic Development, Mr. Stanley Hawthorne, Town Manager, Mr. Micheal Goman of Goman + York.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

Chair Bercowetz called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. The quorum was established with 5 members.

2. Approval of Minutes:

   a. April 12, 2022

   Commissioner Zelman made a motion to approve the April 12, 2022, meeting minutes as amended and Commissioner Firger seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the motion.

3. New Business:

   a. A text amendment on Agritourism:

   Ms. Rodriguez provided documentation, and a link for the Commission’s review concerning agritourism. She stated several farms held events during the warmer seasons trying to bring interesting, exciting, and educational programs to the community. The community supported the programs, however there were some negative impacts. She stated the feedback from the community highlighted the negative impacts to their areas, such as noise (loud music) and traffic.

   Ms. Rodriguez had a brief meeting with Mr. Aaron Romano, who has a small farm in the Town Center. Mr. Romano was interested in bring events to his farm for the community. The major concern was regulations, the regulations referenced the farms but they weren’t supportive of the local farms who considered other methods of earnings to support their farms. The regulations weren’t clear on the kinds of activities supported, and encouraged. The TPZ Commission will have a special meeting on May 19, 2022, to address this issue.

   Chair Bercowetz asked for input from the EDC members, and she asked them to attend the May 19, 2022, TPZ Commission meeting. The Commission was in support of the events, as long as the events didn’t negatively impact the communities.

4. Old Business:

   a. TIF Use Priorities:

   The EDC, and Ms. Rodriguez agreed with Mr. Poland’s recommendations and comments set forth in his letter submitted during the March 8, 2022, EDC meeting.

5. Commission Member Updates:

   a. Arts Council:

   Commissioner Firger stated a meeting is scheduled for May, and Ms. Rodriguez was invited to attend to discuss the Arts Commission agenda. He also stated they have a performance planned and funded by the Judith Warren Dance Company. The dance company will have a major performance at Riverside Park. Ms. Judith Doran will also attend the Arts Commission meeting in May. She’ll provide information on endorsing projects, the Arts Commission doesn’t have the ability to produce or fund, but they can endorse projects. Commissioner Firger also stated they want to do an inventory of artists and art groups in the Town to solicit them and get them involved. He also stated they were short on Arts Commissioners, however someone from Duncaster has shown an interest in the position.

   Commissioner Firger also stated they are interested in having a Covid Memorial or a monument permanently in Bloomfield. It would memorialize the covid epidemic victims that the Town lost, and those that were helpful on the front line.
Commissioner Firger stated they are still pursuing public policy to encourage public comments and input. He collaborated with Ms. Elizabeth Lane who is the Library Director for the Town of Bloomfield and she’s also the Town Facilitator. They want to adopt public policy, they’re interested in entertaining public comments, but not public dictates. He also gave some insight into his interaction with the West Hartford Arts Commission. He stated West Hartford has private sculpture on public property, and he explained.

In reference to arts, Commissioner Zelman recommended addressing the updates of signage in Town, and Chair Bercowetz recommended the murals in Town contain narratives, and artist names. Commissioner Firger was in agreement with them both, and he stated the Bloomfield Arts Commission has been moving along successfully.

6. Public Comments:

Mr. Kevin Gough, located at 5 Bear Ridge Drive, Bloomfield, commented on the tax increment financing. He recommended the EDC create an appendix or list of desired projects that would be eligible for tax abatement. He stated it has been a long standing remaining item from the tax abatement policy which was approved back in 2017. Mr. Gough stated last summer the proposal came in, and the EDC could not answer how it satisfied the desired uses because there weren’t any lists of desired uses. Mr. Gough recommended the EDC create the list and submit it to the Town Council.

Mr. Gough also stated agritourism was a proposal that was submitted to Mr. Giner for an agricultural zone, but it never made it to the final application stage. Mr. Gough stated establishing an agriculture zone is important, but he supports agritourism. He also stated he communicated with Mr. Romano concerning this topic. Mr. Gough stated agritourism needs to be connected to an agricultural function, and he explained. Overall, he supports agritourism and the creation of an agricultural zone.

7. Staff Report:

Ms. Rodriguez submitted via email a lengthy staff report to the EDC, the Commission will review the report, and have comments for the June EDC meeting.

8. Town Projects updates:

a. POCD:

Ms. Rodriguez stated, in regards to the Plan of Conservation and Development the responses were due May 9th, and she’ll be speaking with Ms. Nancy Haynes in reference to the comments that were received. Chair Bercowetz asked for the timeline? Ms. Rodriguez stated once they hear what the consultants propose, generally it takes 12 to 18 months. She stated in Bloomfield there are various plans that are already in place such as the Complete Streets Plan, and the TIF Districts. The Statement of Purpose that is part of those documents, and the RFP for a Clean Energy Plan. She stated all of those plans really lend themselves to an updated Plan of Conservation and Development. Its an incredibly important visionary document. She discussed the plans with Mr. Hawthorne during their initial meetings.

Ms. Rodriguez also discussed the Covid American Rescue Plan Funds. She stated there was a community survey that went out concerning this matter, and it will provide feed back from the community. She will submit any additional information received to the Commission via email.

Ms. Rodriguez also stated the Douglas Street RFP has gone out, they interviewed two respondents both proposing housing. There’s a group called Cass that’s being recommended in order to move the project forward. It will be submitted to the TPZ and the Town Council. They have proposed forty-one 1 and 2 bedroom units, some are affordable.

b. Budget Modification Update:

Ms. Rodriguez stated there were three staff members proposed, two for the building division, a property maintenance inspector, and a deputy building official. Ms. Rodriguez gave details concerning the positions proposed, and she stated the Council approved an Administrative Clerk. Chair Bercowetz congratulated Ms. Rodriguez and Mr. Hawthorne on the accomplishments and progress they made concerning those positions.

c. TPZ:

Chair Bercowetz asked Ms. Rodriguez to put this topic on the June EDC Agenda. And the Cannabis discussion was also placed on the June EDC agenda.
9. EDC Consultant Report (Goman + York):

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

10. Adjournment:

Commissioner Firger made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Zelman seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:34 a.m.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday - June 14, 2022