Chair: Bonnie Bercowetz

Vice Chair: Jerry Katrichis, Commissioner Lenny Hudgen, Commissioner Steven Zelman, Commissioner Siddiq Abdullah, Commissioner Tyriah Williams

Absent: Commissioner Robert Firger, Commissioner Stephen R. Vaughan

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

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

Chair Bercowetz called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. The quorum was established with 7 members.

2. Approval of Minutes:

a. May 11, 2022

Commissioner Zelman made a motion to approve the May 11, 2022, meeting minutes as amended and Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the motion, as amended.

3. New Business:

a. Discussion of Draft Cannabis Regulations – June 30, 2022 TPZ Special Meeting:

Ms. Rodriguez informed the Commission that the TPZ Commission will be having a special meeting on June 30, 2022, concerning this matter. She stated the drafted regulations were created by Mr. Giner prior to his retirement. Ms. Rodriguez forwarded the Cannabis Regulations via email to the Commission, and she stated the regulations can also be found on the town website under the tab of the TPZ Commission. Ms. Rodriguez informed the Commission that communities assumed if they passed regulations there would only be one facility permitted per 25,000 per population, however, it has changed, the communities can now entertain multiple applications for various locations. Prior to the June 30, 2022, TPZ Commission meeting, Ms. Rodriguez will be mapping out locations based on the draft and distances, which would provide the communities with ideals as to where the facilities may be placed. She informed the Commission that it will be retail and distribution. Chair Bercowetz asked was growth, and agriculture included, and would there be a limit on how many locations?

Ms. Rodriguez provided the Commission with the Bloomfield Draft Cannabis Regulations on the screen, which included the specifications of the cannabis cultivation, sale, medical marijuana dispensaries, and production. The draft outlined the purpose, definitions, applicability, separation requirements, sign and exterior display requirements, off-street parking requirements, security requirements, conditions of approval, Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection Approval, additional requirements, principal issues and structures, General Industrial District, Restricted Industry District, Blue Hills Gateway District, and Commercial District. The Bloomfield Draft Cannabis Regulations can be found on the town website under the TPZ Commission’s tab.

Ms. Robidoux asked Ms. Rodriguez to take into account the cannabis transporter business, in Connecticut its called cannabis transporter license, produce packaging, food and beverage manufacturers, product manufacturers, which are all separate applications, and licenses. Ms. Rodriguez stated she’ll research and make the adjustments to the draft cannabis regulations. Ms. Rodriguez also informed the Commission that the regulations were forwarded to the Capital Region Council of Government, and the Clerks Office.

b. Recommendations for EDC vacancy – skill sets Commission needs/lacks:

Chair Bercowetz informed the Commission that there’s a vacancy in the EDC for an additional commissioner. Commissioner Zelman’s recommendation was to add someone to the Commission with a background in accounting. Chair Bercowetz asked the members to recommend interesting candidates.

Chair Bercowetz asked the Commission to review the planning development highlights, she was extremely impressed by the documentation, and she thought it was an excellent job. Chair Bercowetz stated it was an overview of the projects in town.

The Council Members requested town project highlights, therefore Mr. Hawthorne created the format for the planning development highlights with the collaboration of staff, the documentation is similar to a newsletter containing both successes and challenges in the town. The planning development
4. Old Business:
   a. Update on Library Renovation:

      Ms. Rodriguez informed the Commission that the project had been discussed at the last Town Council meeting. And the square footage proposed during the referendum would still be maintained, however with the public’s input the proposed design was larger, and over budget. Therefore, the Committee members discussed how to reduce the budget, and still maintain the original size. Ms. Elizabeth Lane recommended something on a larger scale to provide the services required by the town. Ms. Rodriguez stated there are still alternatives to consider, and more discussions to be had by the Committee to ensure a favorable product. Chair Bercowetz stated people are interested in a new design. Ms. Rodriguez stated she will continue to update the Commission concerning this project as it progress.

   b. Discussion of Draft Agritourism Regulations – June 23 TPZ Regular Meeting:

      Ms. Rodriguez informed the Commission that the TPZ Commission will be meeting on June 23, 2022, concerning this matter. Mr. Aaron J. Romano has been before the TPZ Commission several times, he submitted a petition for a proposed zoning regulation text amendment to allow for the expansion of farm activities to include agritourism. Agritourism is any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreation, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, ranching, historic, cultural, harvest your own activities or natural activities and attraction.

      At the last meeting, Mr. Romano submitted his draft, but the Commission had concerns about the impact on the surrounding neighbors, along with other issues. The Commission asked Mr. Romano to further develop the language, and resubmit the regulations with revisions. Ms. Rodriguez will also review the documentation with Mr. Romano, and some of the concerned public members to develop the language necessary to bring forth an approved product for both the TPZ Commission, and the community. Ms. Rodriguez stated she will also submit documentation to the EDC for their review.

5. Commission Member Updates:
   a. Arts Council – Commissioner Robert Firger:

      Commissioner Firger wasn’t available to give an update on the Arts Council.

6. Town Planner’s Project Report:

Ms. Rodriguez provided the project report for the Commission’s review.

Chair Bercowetz asked the Commission for questions or comments concerning the Planning Development Highlights. Chair Bercowetz expressed an interest in the small business equity funds, she asked would it be partnered with a bank or an independent entity? Ms. Rodriguez stated, generally the Community would partner with a bank, the Chamber could administer the program, and she continued to explain the process.

The American Rescue Plan was discussed at this meeting, Ms. Rodriguez gave updates. She stated a consultant was hired, and they are in the middle of collecting the community surveys to better understand the impacts, desires and needs of the Community. The Staff and departments are also bring forth ideas for consideration.

Mr. Hawthorne provided information on the federal government distribution of funds and the allocation of those funds for the stabilization from the outcome of Covid, and he spoke in-depth. Mr. Hawthorne also touched on his discussions with the Wintonbury Mall owner, they are engaging in conversations with the owner. The EDC Commissioners were extremely appreciative of Mr. Hawthorne accomplishment concerning that matter.

Chair Bercowetz was interested in more involvement with the Design Review Board. There were discussions of more involvement, more interaction, who they are and their role in the town structure. Chair Bercowetz and Ms. Rodriguez will be meeting to discuss the Design Review Board.

7. EDC Consultant Report (Goman + York):

Goman + York provided a written report for the Commission’s review.
8. Public Comments: None

9. Adjournment:

Commissioner Zelman made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Vice Chair Katrichis seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 a.m.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday – July 12, 2022