Chair: Bonnie Bercowetz

Vice Chair: Jerry Katrichis, Commissioner Lenny Hudgen, Commissioner Robert Firger, Commissioner Steven Zelman, Commissioner Siddiq Abdullah, Commissioner Stephen R. Vaughan

Absent: Commissioner Tyrakah Williams

Also present: Mr. Stanley Hawthorne, Town Manager, Ms. Jennifer Rodriguez, Director of Planning and Economic Development, Mr. Michael Goman and Ms. Denise Robidoux 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 7 members.

2. Approval of Minutes:

a. June 14, 2022

The approval of the minutes were rescheduled because some Commission members weren’t sworn in yet, therefore the June 14, 2022, EDC meeting minutes will be approved at the August 9, 2022, EDC meeting.

3. New Business:

a. Commission members sworn in for the new term:

Chair Bercowetz asked all EDC members that had not been sworn in to get sworn in for the new term.

b. Presentation by a potential new business, Focchi Glass Panel Assembly

Ms. Rodriguez informed the EDC that the presentation from Focchi Glass Panel Assembly was cancelled because the director of the Focchi Company was unavailable. However, the presentation has been rescheduled for the EDC August 9, 2022, meeting. Ms. Robidoux informed Ms. Rodriguez that Mr. David Driver had communicated with someone in the company. Mr. Driver informed her that the company was looking forward to presenting a presentation of their material at the August 9, 2022, EDC meeting.

Ms. Rodriguez gave a brief summary of the company’s proposal. She also stated the Focchi Company is a glass production company, they assemble parts at their office, and they do not change the physical space. Ms. Rodriguez provided the website for the Commission to review Focchi Company’s operation before the presentation at the August 9, 2022, EDC meeting.

4. Old Business:

a. Review the TPZ Commission June 23, 2022, Agritourism Discussion:

Ms. Rodriguez informed the EDC that the TPZ Commission June 23, 2022, Agritourism discussion was cancelled because the TPZ did not have a quorum for the meeting. She would like to review the present regulations with Mr. Marc Needelman before the next TPZ Commission meeting.

Ms. Rodriguez also stated because this petition was an applicant driven regulatory request, they are on a statutory deadline, however the applicant did grant the sixty-five (65) day extension to keep the hearing open. Also they are under a community led regulatory change, they have the expiration of the moratorium. She stated they must move forward with a thorough review, good language, and swiftly. They would like to handle all of the applications properly as they come into the office, and they would like to be able to give the community the control they need while allowing the opportunities agritourism will give the community. She’ll keep the EDC updated concerning this matter, as they move forward with the progress.

b. Review the TPZ Commission June 30, 2022, Cannabis Regulations Discussion:

Ms. Rodriguez informed the EDC that at the June 30, 2022, TPZ Commission meeting one of the Commissioners recused themselves, and the TPZ Commission did not have a quorum to vote. The TPZ Commission will be rescheduling the meeting, but no date has been announced. The office will be resending a legal notice once a date has been rescheduled.
Before Mr. Giner retired he created the Cannabis Regulations, although they are comprehensive, there were a number of licenses mentioned in the documentation, definitions not specifically placed in each of the zones. Ms. Rodriquez want clarification, therefore more research needs to take place.

Ms. Rodriguez discussed the document with Ms. Robidoux, and they agreed the documentation must be specific concerning food, beverages, trucking, transportation, types of licenses, and distributing licenses. Those were items in the definition that weren’t specifically listed in each of the zones under the permitted list. Also Ms. Rodriguez stated Mr. Marc Needleman comments must be addressed, plus other questions raised must also be addressed. She’ll proceed forward keeping everyone informed as they progress.

5. Commission Member Updates:

   a. Arts Council – Commissioner Robert Firger:

Commissioner Firger wasn’t available to give an update on the Arts Council because of technical problems with his equipment.

6. Town Planner’s Project Report:

Ms. Rodriguez provided the project report for the Commission’s review at the last meeting, the report hasn’t been updated because the group didn’t meet yet. However, she did have a couple of updates that will be on the next report. Because of technical equipment problems she gave a verbal report of the additions. Regarding the Wintonbury Mall project, they met last month there were a number of staff members there, Goman + York was also there. They had a discussion with the property owner about making improvement, he seemed serious about redevelopment. The owner asked for site information, file information, and he asked the town staff and Goman + York for information concerning the matter. Ms. Rodriguez informed the Commission that the engineer has been in constant communications with the property owner. However, a contract hasn’t been submitted only a pen drawing. The community has been exploring other prospects for redevelopment of that particular property. Ms. Rodriguez will keep the EDC abreast of the progress made on the Wintonbury Mall project.

The Cannabis Regulation was also part of the report but it was already discussed. However, she added one important factor, there has been new regulations now more than one facility can be approved per community. Initially, the statute only allowed one facility per 25,000 people per town, however, the legislation changed, and now the communities can have more than one per town. This town’s regulations must be in place as soon as possible.

The TPZ Commission will be having special meetings twice a month for the next few months, between the application volume and the local efforts everyone has been making progress. Ms. Rodriguez stated they’ll have meetings to handle both applications, the Plan of Conservation and Development, and the affordable housing plan. She also stated they have started interviewing for an additional administrative clerk, and she gave a description of that position’s responsibility. She’ll make sure the Commissions are legally compliant and ahead of time for all boards and commissions. Ms. Rodriguez discussed other available positions and the progress made to find the person to fill them.

She stated there was little progress with the new community video, they did schedule a production meeting, and at that meeting they’ll discuss everyone’s position. There are staff members that will be part of the meeting. Ms. Rodriguez wants to make sure celebratory events or activities are focused on and included. The Celebrate Bloomfield event has been proposed for August 27, 2022, other events will start on August 25, 2022, and continue on throughout the weekend. There will also be a videographer at the events. Ms. Rodriguez asked the Commission to email her with any activities they want highlighted.

Ms. Rodriguez stated Ms. Robidoux was extremely helpful concerning the small business support and housing rehabilitation programs. The small business funds decision is an item for the Council, in reference to which projects they want to move forward with regards to the community investment funds. The first round did not include the small business program, however because of the competitive nature of the community submissions the small business support funds may be included. Ms. Robidoux has worked with them in creating the language for the applications. The community investment funds support and catalyze local economic development. At present, they completed the creation of the templates, funding, community interests, and the decision makers input are their next move going forward.

Ms. Rodriguez informed the Commission that Amazon reached out to the Town Manager’s office and Mr. Melesko at Leisure Services about holding an Amazon recruiting event for employees. She also
stated they held a tour last week with the Metro Hartford Alliance. They presented a short presentation about types of economic development incentives and redevelopment communities. It was encouraging and contained quality of life improvement that has happened over a number of years. And they presented goals for the near future, she would be sharing that material with the Commission. They drove around for hours taking photographs, they stopped in to speak with local businesses, and they drove by some of the major employers. The Metro Hartford Alliance are seeking input for their blogs, which is an article that the Town can also share or link to the Town’s website.

Mr. Hawthorne gave an update on the redevelopment agency, he stated on July 27, 2022, there was a meeting held with the Town Council on proceeding with codifying through the ordinance the forming of the development of an agency.

At that meeting, the Town Council requested more information on whether to proceed with the EDC as a form of constituting development agency or to proceed with appointments made by the mayor and endorsed by the Town Council. They also questioned, if the Town Council could serve as the development agency. The Town Council received material from the Town Attorney on this subject and the Town Attorney determined that in their opinion the Town Council should not be considered as an option. Mr. Hawthorne stated based on the feedback received July 27, 2022, the item came too late to put on the agenda. Also the Council is indecisive concerning the formation of the board.

The EDC is recognized as a statute and even though it requires reconstituting, exactly how the Town’s EDC is purposed, its still an option. There will be another discussion on the topic, which will be on the agenda next week at the Town Council meeting. Mr. Hawthorne or Ms. Rodriguez will keep the Commission updated. There was in-depth conversation concerning this matter with Mr. Hawthorne and the Commission.

7. EDC Consultant Report (Goman + York):

Goman + York provided a written report for the Commission’s review. Chair Bercowetz asked Mr. Goman to give an overview of real estate. Mr. Goman mentioned the fact that people are working remotely there has been a reduction in office space. He stated retail has been hit the hardest, warehouse logistics is doing well, and he continued to answer questions.

8. Public Comments: None

9. Adjournment:

The EDC meeting was adjourned at 9:21 a.m.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday – August 9, 2022