



TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT
Economic & Community Development Department
2750 Dixwell Avenue
Hamden, Connecticut 06518

Dale Kroop, Director

Minutes: The Economic Development Commission, Town of Hamden, held a Regular Meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, May 12, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center. The following topics were discussed:

Commissioners in Attendance: Mr. Sachetti, Mr. Rolnick, Mr. Diaz, Mr. DelGrego, Mr. Moses, Mr. DeNicola, Ms. Sacco, Mr. Smolnik, Mr. Good, Mr. Huston

Others in Attendance: Economic and Community Development Director Mr. Kroop, Commission Clerk Ms. Tobin

There were no members of the public in attendance.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Sachetti called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

2. Review Minutes of February 11, 2020

Ms. Tobin reported one correction to the minutes, and that was the addition of Mr. Diaz to those in attendance.

Mr. DelGrego made a motion to approve the minutes of February 11th as corrected. Mr. Good seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Informal notes of March 10, 2020 (no vote required)

3. Report of the Director

Mr. Sachetti asked Mr. Kroop to proceed with his report. Mr. Kroop reported that his role is changing. He also mentioned the great job the Hamden Chamber is doing. Mr. Kroop is moving forward with what are we doing now and how to we get people back to work. Mr. Pearce is working with several businesses helping them to apply for the new grants and loans available because of Covid-19. What do our various business clusters need to get going again. He will do a seminar for Health Care providers and Work Force developers. The Manufacturing cluster is starting a statewide group consulting on reorganizing to comply with the new rules, a version of CBIA but for manufacturing. They will need PPE and how to space out their floor plans.

4. Old Businesses

Gehring Steel is completing their addition of 2,000 square feet and they will receive their incentives and tax benefits.

Mr. Kroop reported that the contract to design a new website has been awarded to Web Solutions. He might tap the committee again for input. The money is in the marketing budget.

Mr. Diaz mentioned that businesses should be focusing on the Governor's guidelines and regulations. Mr. Kroop said he will publish those guidelines on constant comment. Mr. Kroop has been working with the Hamden Plaza. He mentioned that some stores are open for curbside sales. He is working with Planning and Zoning regarding banners that say we're still open. Planning and Zoning will allow banners for another 90 days. Tesla will be installing the charging stations where the old cars art piece was located. There are several spots to fill in the Plaza and there are some new tenants that he can't discuss yet.

The Swimming School in the Mart is not going forward because of the virus, but there is a possibility of an Urgent Care taking that space.

Mr. Kroop is helping with the rewrite of the Zoning Regulations, and they are working on several modifications. He just heard that Mr. Kops is planning to retire in January. There was discussion of a possible replacement for Mr. Kops, but until then, Mr. Davis is very capable of doing the job.

There was discussion of the Budget process and the possibility of the consolidation of Departments. This was not approved by the Legislative Council and is not going forward. Mr. Kroop has asked for an assistant director of economic and community development. This position is still in the budget. The Council has until June 10th to pass the budget. Because of some of the large projects Mr. Kroop is working on, he feels he needs the help. One of those projects is the High Meadows property. Once the wetland study, engineering and building reviews are done, he will bring in a developer. The Town has the option to purchase the property until June of 2021, with a one year extension. The Town can purchase the parcel and sell it to a developer, or a developer could purchase it directly from the state.

He is also working on the Maselli Farm project. The Town purchased the 35 acres a few years ago, and the Mayor's Office is looking at revenue opportunities. The government offices are still closed to the public, but they are receiving many calls. Ms. Forvil has been out sick for the last two months.

5. New Businesses

Mr. Sachetti asked if any Hamden businesses have called him for guidance. Mr. Kroop said he can direct them to apply for loans. Mr. Pearce is getting calls looking for assistance. The DEEP offered a loan, and 5,000 businesses applied for that within 72 hours. Businesses need PPE and the Payroll Protection Program. There is a lot of information out there.

6. Project Updates: Redevelopment, Openings, Etc.

- Mr. Kroop said the Skiff Street Bridge will be finished soon, probably before their 6/15/20 deadline. The other bridge at the Wilbur Cross Parkway is on the list for the next 3-5 years. Many businesses will be impacted by that project and will be part of the planning stage.
- The work is ongoing at the Residence Inn, and his guess is early 2021 for opening.
- Porter and Chester has been closed because of Covid-19

- CVS is moving along and should be ready by the beginning of summer.
- Mr. Kroop has not heard of any of our businesses closing.

Mr. Diaz asked if he sees restaurants changing their business model. Mr. Kroop feels until there is a vaccine, he sees outdoor service, curbside pickup and delivery. He mentioned that his son drives for several delivery companies and grocery shopping and is very busy.

Mr. Good asked if Gehring Steel was the company that had the problem with Amtrak. Mr. Kroop explained when they did their addition, a tiny portion of it was on the Amtrack property, which was verified by an A-2 survey. It took eight months to straighten this out, but with help from Chris Murphy's office, it was resolved.

Tony DelGrego asked about Hop Knot. Mr. Kroop said this building was close to being a Credit Union, before Hop Knot, and that fell apart. Another possible deal with a bank fell apart. Right now we are nowhere with that property.

Mr. Sachetti mentioned the affordable housing on West Wood Road is coming along. Mr. Kroop said it looks like 40-50 units. They will start marketing in June for occupancy in September.

Mr. Good asked about real estate in general. Mr. Kroop talked about the problems with building inspections. The inspectors didn't want to go into buildings. They were given face shields to complete commercial inspections. Residential inspections are a bigger problem. The Town will see some financial issues because permits and conveyance fees are down. Residential is a bigger problem.

Mr. Good got a notice that B&D Deli changed hands. Mr. Kroop was not aware of that. Mr. Kroop mentioned most stores have signs "no mask no service".

Mr. Kroop described a raffle that East Hartford is doing to support small businesses. They are purchasing gift cards from the local businesses and raffling them off using people's receipts as raffle tickets. Great idea but a lot of work.

A restaurant is donating meals to hospitals for first responders.. What are we doing for people working in nursing homes? He is thinking of working with restaurants/delis and raising money to pay for food to be sent by a restaurant to workers in nursing homes.

Mr. Good asked Ms. Sacco what plans Quinnipiac has. Ms. Sacco replied that this is all subject to change, but they are looking at trying to have students come back in the fall. They will know more after the June 1st application deadline. Nationwide, colleges expect a 20% reduction in students.

Ms. Sacco wondered if there is a plan to put picnic tables in the restaurant parking lots to provide additional outdoor eating. Mr. Kroop said he has been talking to Mr. DeRisi, the Town's recycling coordinator, about building picnic tables for Town Center Park.

Mr. Rolnick mentioned that in New Haven, they are closing off some of the streets for restaurant outdoor dining. Maybe some restaurants could use a portion of their parking lots.

Mr. DeNicola asked about the zoning regulations regarding outdoor dining. He said they are allowed to have 50% of their indoor seating. Mr. Kroop said they might be waiving the proportional requirements temporarily.

Mr. Sachetti asked if anyone had comments or questions.

Mr. Diaz mentioned that Quinnipiac nursing students are helping out at Whitney Center and that students in the school of nursing made masks to distribute.

Mr. Kroop said Quinnipiac School of Medicine has a volunteer program to put together PPE and personal items such as toothpaste, for homeless people.

Mr. Kroop was asked about the infections and deaths in Hamden's nursing homes. He replied that Hamden Health Care and Arden House have had 10-12 deaths each. Whitney Center has had one death.

7. Adjournment

There was no further business to discuss. Mr. Sachetti asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. DelGrego made a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeNicola seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk