



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, June 9, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. The following topics were discussed:

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

Commissioners Absent: Mr. Moses, Mr. DeNicola

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

1. Call to Order

Mr. Sachetti called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

2. Review Minutes of May 12, 2020

Corrections to Minutes: Change heading to reflect Zoom Meeting; #1 Call to order change time to 5:33; Page 2 Paragraph 3, change comment to contact

Mr. Diaz made a motion to approve the minutes of May 12 2020 as corrected. Mr. DelGrego seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

3. Report of the Director

Mr. Kroop mentioned that he had no budget report, but there are been no major expenses and there is a balance of \$140,000 in unencumbered funds. He said that even though we are in an unusual time, he is very busy with normal projects. Coming out of isolation, a task force has been formed with the Hamden Chamber, made up of representatives from all different sectors, manufacturing, health care, construction, real estate, retail, etc., to help businesses. They have met twice, and the next meeting is tomorrow. The meetings are about solving problems and helping people succeed.

Fear is a problem. Some are less fearful of entering businesses than others, but we need to identify businesses that are safe. Businesses are self certifying on the State website. The task force is pursuing a Hamden centric icon, maybe a sticker, banner or sandwich board sign indicating approval by QVHD in addition to the State stickers. Mr. Kroop got a haircut and Nancy of the chamber videoed the barber. We will heavily promote this concept. One task member had a great thought to celebrate good, positive news. Another idea was to create a page for best practices forum for any type of businesses. How did you hire, train, etc. for each sector with no complaints or politics allowed. The task force is in its infancy stage.

Mr. Good asked regarding icon standards is virus testing part of the process. Mr. Kroop said he does not know the total protocol, but testing temperatures, etc., yes. Mr. Kroop will be meeting with the task force tomorrow and will verify this. He has been working on this with the chamber, because Nancy had to lay off her two employees and she has been working full time for part time pay.

Mr. Kroop said reopening starting on June 17th includes gyms and indoor dining. Indoor events will still be limited to 10 for now. Some rules are still coming out. There will be another round of openings in 30 days depending on how round two goes. Some states are reopening too soon. All Town events are canceled this summer. They might try to have the Farmer's Market performers, who will not be included in this year's Farmer's Market, do street performances.

Mr. Kroop reported that Web Solutions has been hired to redo the Economic Development web site. Their contract will start on July 1st. He has done some preliminary work with them, and he will share that after review.

The Budget Hearings according to Mr. Kroop were an unpleasant experience. The Council budget eliminated REX Development from his budget. The Mayor can veto the budget and needs 2/3 of Council to override the veto. Mr. Kroop said his department makes out better with the Mayor's budget. Most of his travel has been cut. There was spirited debate about what he should be doing.

6. Project Updates: Redevelopment, Openings, Etc.

- The Skiff Street Bridge project will be completed ahead of its July 17th deadline.
- The West Woods Road housing project is very close to receiving its CO with occupancy due this summer. It is a combination of market rate and affordable housing.
- The CVS at Putnam and Dixwell is close to receiving its CO. It should open by the end of summer.
- Tonight at the Planning and Zoning meeting, there will be discussion on allowing businesses to put out banners and extra exterior signage to show they are open. They change would allow an additional 90 days for banners, sandwich board signs, etc.
- They will also be discussing a change in the ratio of interior/exterior dining.
- The hotel is moving forward. The original finish date was August of 2020. He is thinking possibly late fall 2020.

Regarding incentive projects, Gehring Steel added 2000SF on their State Street property. They were approved for a \$3,000 grant and tax abatements. The \$3,000 grant is being processed.

New owner of Stereo Station got a building permit. A new application has been approved for the former D'Camm building. The applicant is putting in \$75,000 and opening a good men's clothing store.

Hamden Plaza is putting in Tesla charging stations where the former car art was located, and will add more for other make cars. The tenants in the Plaza are on triple net leases. There are potential new tenants for the empty spaces.

Hamden Economic Development Corporation was involved in the Stereo Station project. Mr. Kroop said the impact of Covid has been devastating to the incubator project. They have four tenants and are

working on a 5th. People and brokers have not been showing the building much, and there are no events scheduled. He applied to the SBA for a disaster loan. They are okay for a few months. He has interest from Quinnipiac Medical School. They will be using the gym until September to assemble packets for the homeless. The corporation agreed. This is getting nice press. The packets will be delivered to various homeless locations like Columbus House. He has turned the air conditioning on in the building.

It is time for Commission elections again. Elections will be held in July. Rules will be reviewed and sent out to members.

Mr. DelGrego asked about the Sherman Avenue land next to Utility Communications. Mr. Kroop said a company is looking into putting multi family housing in that location.

Ms. Sacco asked if there are any businesses doing really well because of the pandemic. Mr. Kroop replied Stop & Shop, Price Rite, Aldi's and Shop Rite are doing very well He is concerned about retail. Shopping Centers have been giving rent relief. Big Box stores are doing really well.

Ms. Sacco mentioned child care. She read that one half of all child care businesses could go out of businesses. That would be terrible because of all the things that could happen as a result of this happening. Mr. Kroop said he does not have a lot of detail yet. Child Care is the #1 thing across the board. There were nine kids for every space before the virus. A study needs to be done. This is a key issue and Mr. Kroop invited Ms. Sacco to attend a task force meeting. Ms. Sacco will send out a survey via survey monkey. Mr. Diaz suggested 211 has a lot of good demographic information. The Greater New Haven book has a lot of information that could be helpful in its Community Index

Mr. Kroop feels that the critical topic to bring back Hamden Economy is Broadband. Many businesses think work from home is a great idea. The digital divide becomes an issue. We need to restart the conversation about high speed internet. This competes with another big issue. There is a debate about street lights in Hamden. A faction within the Town wants to purchase and own all street lights in Hamden. He is against that idea because of the Town's financial situation. He would rather take on Broadband and would submit a letter of support. Mr. DelGrego suggested zipskinny for information.

Mr. Sachetti thanked everyone for attending today's meeting and asked commissioners to try to make the meeting next month for elections. Last year we had 100% participation. Mr. Sachetti asked for a motion to adjourn.

7. Adjournment

Mr. DelGrego made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Rolnick seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk