



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

**Dale Kroop, Director**

**Town of Hamden**  
**Economic Development Commission**

**Minutes:** The Economic Development Commission held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, May 14, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center, 2750 Dixwell Avenue, Hamden.

Commissioners in Attendance: Donald Moses, Steve Diaz, Sherrie Borelli, Anthony Sacchetti, Steve Rolnick, David DeNicola, Anthony Inzero

Commissioners Excused: Rachel Gretencord, Dolores Giannini, DelGrego, Zambrano

Guests: CTWorks Christina Bartucco, Hamden Library Director Marian Amadeo, Neighborhood Works New Horizons Gloribell Lopez

1. Call to order Mr. Sacchetti called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. Reading and Approval of minutes of April 9, 2013  
**Mr. DeNicola made a motion to approve the minutes of April 9, 2013. Mr. Moses seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.**
3. Speaker: Commissioner Steve Diaz of CT Works  
Step Up and Other Job Training Grant Programs for Businesses

Commissioners Diaz is with CTWorks and is assisting companies with staffing. The company identifies a staffing need, meets with CTWorks, which does all of the leg work, sets up interview, and discuss what type of training the candidate might need. If the company is interested in obtaining the reimbursements that are available, CTWorks will provide training, with a time frame. The reimbursement is on a scale based on the size of the organization. The company gets the reimbursement while the person is in training. After June 30<sup>th</sup>, the reimbursement will be 50% of the salary no matter the size of the company.

The Step Up program is a small manufacturing company training program, with a reimbursement of up to \$12,000 over six months for training purposes. The requirements are that the business has to be located in the State of Connecticut for one year in good standing, be a good citizen, and must show what their workers compensation program looks like.

The non manufacturing benefit is a reimbursement to an employer for creating jobs and training individuals. The criteria requires that the company be of 100 employees or less, the job seeker must

be unemployed and must fit into 250 % of the federal poverty level of \$11,170 for 1 person. If they are at that level or below, they are eligible for the program. For this program the job applicant has to be from one of the six towns the state has identified. The towns were selected because they have the highest unemployment rate. If you see someone you would be interested in hiring, that is unemployed, you can do a reverse referral. Many organizations are taking advantage of these programs, both on the manufacturing and non manufacturing side. Only new hires can participate in the OJT program. The contract has to be written before the person starts work Mr. Diaz said CTWorks make it very easy.

Mr. Kroop said the health care industry needs some assistance. Mr. Kroop asked if there is any data now as to who is using the program. Mr. Diaz said he works mostly with manufacturing companies.

Ms. Bartucca does technical skills training. This program is funded by the money employers pay when they hire foreign workers with H1-B visas, which cost between \$3,000 and \$4,000 each.

They have a four year grant that started 4/1/2012 which provides a 50-75% reimbursement through the life of grant. Reimbursement depends on size of the company. There is no salary cap. Technical, engineering, advanced manufacturing, etc. training is provided. The candidate can be either unemployed or underemployed. There is a small window of exceptions for people who do not fit either of those criteria, and they also take reverse referrals. Contracts can be up to 24 weeks. There are no restrictions on companies, size of companies, and the company does not have to have a home base in CT, but must have a presence here. This is money back to the company's bottom line. There is no limit on the number of contracts a company can enter into Ms. Bartucco has one company with 11 contracts that will receive over \$100,000 back. Ms. Bartucco said the key is if you know someone unemployed or underemployed, or a company looking to hire, please reach out to CTWorks, and they will do the work for you. With this program, the candidate has to be a new hire, but could be someone you hired through a temp agency. They have made 208 placements in less than a year. There is a high demand for IT, database technicians, medical, engineering, and manufacturing. The on the job training is whatever the company would normally do when they bring on a new employee.

Mr. Diaz mentioned they also look at retention. They follow their placements for a year, but if someone doesn't work out, there is no risk and a new contract can be entered into with a new person. They provide companies with candidates based on the company requirements. They also have support services for employees, to help make sure they can get to work and can function appropriately.

Mr. Diaz said there has been money in the past to train current staff in new technology, new equipment, etc. Hamden is big on business retention. Mr. Kroop is ~~pushing~~ **encouraging** the health care industry to take advantage of these opportunities. He will try to get this information out to as many organizations as possible, and also to individuals that are unemployed or underemployed.

Ms. Bartucca said they also provide on line courses, of which they have a huge catalog, called Metris Online Learning.

Mr. Diaz can provide the catalog on line for Mr. Kroop to distribute. The position would be full time as determined by the company.

#### 4. Report of the Director

Budget: Mr. Kroop reported an unencumbered budget of \$372,129. A report from the company that services our loans shows \$97,000 in accounts receivable through April 30<sup>th</sup>. There was discussion on some of the loans have not been paid off or are behind. In addition to the \$97,000 we have approximately \$124,000 that we can lend. We have one outstanding loan application for \$25,000 for equipment purchase. Mr. Sacchetti asked about one company with two loans. Mr. Kroop said they are making minimum payments on their real estate loan until they clear up their other loan. They are still 4 -6 months behind on the big loan and are catching up on the small loan. Richard Pearce is working with this company.

#### 5. Old Business:

Mr. Kroop reported that the speaker series for this Commission has been exhausted, but he would like to have a speaker on health care for small businesses. He would also like to schedule speakers from September 2013 going forward and maybe one for June. The Chamber is doing one on health care. Mr. Inzero mentioned having a speaker for companies needing to rework their benefits as necessary to comply with Obama Care.

Ms. Borelli will speak at the Commission's June meeting about the ~~C-Pace~~ **new Gas Conversion Pilot program for residential and commercial customers** ~~program for gas conversions~~. Mr. Kroop plans to bring ~~afornentioned~~ C-Pace to the council in August. Ms. Borelli said three RFPs will be issued tomorrow. Hamden will issue an RFP for insulation contractor/s to offer reduced insulation prices and a second RFP for HVAC upgrade contractor/s. This is mostly residential, but small businesses will be able to participate. This is a weatherization, insulation and upgrade opportunity, and a gas conversion opportunity at the same time. This is a pilot program. The Town, the utilities, and the DEEP, are all stakeholders. There is also a low interest financing component. There will also be an RFP for an outreach counselor who will be working with Ms. Borelli to try to spread the word. They will be having forums to explain the program. Ms. Borelli said we have 8000 potential customers in Hamden, and maybe another 5400 customers, who are either on or near a main. Energize Hamden is a program of UI, and Energize Waterbury is a program of CLP.

Town Budget: Mr. Kroop said the budget will supposedly be approved this week. It probably won't vary much from the Mayor's budget presentation. Funds for economic development **programs** are not provided by the general fund.

Mr. Kroop said he would like to pay attention to the Zoning Regulations this summer. There have been lots of questions and concerns, particularly regarding properties with two separate zones. The Town has some critical vacant properties that have two different zones on them. There are some text changes in the Zoning Regulations that are in public hearing right now. The Planning Office has been working with Mr. Kroop.

The four part BAC Series is now over. With all of the outreach and many requests to attend, the turnout was 8-12 at each. Those that attended were very happy. The next series will be a podcast on their web site. BAC will rerun their series in the fall of 2013. Attorney Rolnick said he had 15-20 people at his session on different business entities. Mr. Kroop said we want to target companies that are operating out of their homes and will have to develop appropriate commercial space once these home businesses are ready to move out of their home locations.

Staffing – Mr. Kroop said he has had a wonderful temp working 25 hours a week, and that job can now be posted and filled permanently. It will remain at 25 hours per week. He also has had his former Quinnipiac Presidential Fellow Kristen helping out in his office and hopes to keep her through August. She has been doing a lot of press releases and write ups on businesses. Dale will have his new Quinnipiac fellow in the next few weeks, and that person will work full time for the summer. Mr. Kroop mentioned changes in department heads in Town Hall.

Mayor Jackson has announced he will run for reelection.

6. New Business:

7. Project Updates: Redevelopment, Openings, Etc.

Mr. Kroop did an article on the lack of available property and Hamden's low vacancy rate. There are several new businesses and new developments going on. Business Resource Center at the library, which he started when he first came to work for the Town in 1999, needs updating, and he and Library Director Amodeo are planing to invest some time and funds there. Ms. Amodeo said there needs to be some staff training and updating of material.

- ⤴ Chipotle is opened next to the Gap.
- ⤴ The fitness centers are bringing a lot of bodies—**Customers to** the Plaza and the Mart.
- ⤴ Good Old Tom's has moved over next to Gentleman's Warehouse from the Home Depot Plaza.
- ⤴ #1 Fish Market is back. He Came to our incentive program in 2001. His plan is to double or triple the size of his State Street building. We extended his program several times, and finally decided to take the money back. We will reconsider an application once he has zoning approval and a building permit. He will reapply. Mr. Kroop has seen the plan.
- ⤴ We are still getting requests from food people and personal trainers.
- ⤴ We have a possible tenant for the one empty building left on Welton Street (275). Tim Nolan has started a Service Master Franchise. They do emergency and service work after damage from fire, floods, etc.
- ⤴ Centerplan, an offshoot of BL Companies, has purchased the industrial building on the corner of Mather and Dixwell. The building was on the market for \$3.4 million initially, and was finally sold at auction for \$750,000. They have a tenant for 10,000 sf building. They will knock down the building and build two new buildings on the site. This will elevate that corner. There is another project on the horizon for a big medical group just south of there. This area is generating a lot of buzz. An industrial building on Haig Street, has been foreclosed on.
- ⤴ Mr. Kroop reported that there is something going on on the Skiff Street property across from Stop & Shop.
- ⤴ Tommy' Kaye's plaza has filled up.

Mr. DeNicola asked asked about the Centerville Lumber property. Mr. Kroop said there is a large commercial development going to Zoning, which would involve tearing down the small strip building, keeping the lumber building, and putting a single use building on the property.

Mr. DeNicola also asked about the vacancies on the old Spring Glen Florist property. Mr. Kroop said there are several issues with that property.

Ms. Lopez works with Neighbor Works New Horizons. They are planning an open house, probably in June, to promote what has been accomplished. Ms. Lopez explained that Highwood Square is a combination residential and retail site. There are 27 res units and some commercial space in three buildings. Their tenants are an art professor from Southern Connecticut State University, an artist with studio space displaying her work and Frontier Financial, CT Dental is in the process of moving in. There is still several small studio spaces available, which would be suitable for professional offices, but there is no on street visibility.

Himmel Brothers – is in a complicated conversation about big taxes and pollution.

The Corporation is cranking along with Newhall structural work. 80 houses have been rehabbed and they are working on another 20. The \$5 million grant is down to \$120,000.

Mr. Kroop is working on funding for the Hamden Business Incubator for the old Newhall Community Center. Hopefully that will happen in the next two months.

Old Middle School Study – The Town has provided funding for a study to determine what is inside the building. We have only known what is on the outside of the school. In order to know the future of the building. BL Companies environmental department is doing the study, which should be completed by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Kroop has someone interested in the building now and this study will help him answer questions about the building. If this deal doesn't go forward, the Town will have a big decision to make regarding remediation or demolition.

Mr. Kroop is managing the parks restoration of Rochford Field and Mill Rock Park with environmental consultants Haley and Aldrich.

8. Adjournment

**Mr. Inzero made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Diaz seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.**

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk

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