



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

Dale Kroop, Director

Informal Notes: The Economic Development Commission, Town of Hamden, held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, April 8, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center. The following issues were discussed:

Commissioners in Attendance: Bob Zambrano, Steve Rolnick, David DeNicola, Rachel Gretencord and newly appointed member A. E. Rodriguez

Commissioners Absent: Anthony DelGrego, Anthony Inzero, Sheri Borrelli, Steven Diaz, Donald Moses

Commissioners Excused: Dolores Giannini, Anthony Sachetti

Guests in Attendance: Cornelius Cobb of SCORE, Andrew Marchand-Shapiro, Shaundolyn Slaughter of LWVCT and NHSC, Anthony Saldamarco of Central Auto Auction, Peter Saldamarco of Central Auto Auction, Annette Belwick

A quorum was not available. An informal session was held.

1. Call to order

Mr. Kroop started the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

2. Reading and Approval of minutes of the Meeting of March 11, 2014

Tabled to the May 13th meeting.

3. Speaker Series

Empathy in the Workplace: Creating Spaces Where People Want to Work

Joe Brummer, Associate Executive Director of Community Mediation

Joe Brummer addressed the Commission and guests. He said he mediates divorces, criminal issues, parking, zoning, schools, neighborhood conflicts, workplace conflicts, etc. He gets the most calls for going into businesses to determine reasons for conflict. They are called into mediate the disbanding of businesses, how partnerships will be ended, personality conflict among employees, and nine times out of ten they discover that the conflict is due to a workplace culture that perpetuates conflict and problems. They get called in to do training. There has to be some conflict in workplaces, because it drives creativity and forms new ideas. Mr. Brummer said he just formed a training committee, and made sure there were people on the committee that didn't agree with him.

We've all been told "there is nothing personal, it is just business." You don't check your humanity at your time-clock. That is just now how things work. There is a groundswell of bringing empathy back

to the workplace. It is productive and makes the bottom line. A report from Gallup says 70% of people are disengaged from their workplace. They just want the paycheck.

We have to get away from the idea in the workplace that you can make people come to work and do their job. Dan Pink's work "Drive" is a good source of information. Employees that are given a chance to work from home one day a week will be more productive. Employees like professional development – they like getting better. How do we get purpose back into the workplace – employees need to understand why they do what they do. There have been many books put out on this subject in the last five years. Empathy is one of Gortex' biggest values. Nike, Harley Davidson, and other companies are doing specific empathy training for supervisors. Fostering a relationship with employees keeps them on board and saves money because these people will remain on the job. Training new employees costs more than keeping current employees.

Mr. Brummer said he is working with Yale's innovation team where people can express new ideas for IT or technology, and the supervisors can either implement or turn down the ideas.

Getting verbal or written warnings just causes employee to be disgruntled. Instead, write up a support agreement – how can we support you so you can support us and get the job done.

Look for things that make employees want to go to work. Revisit performance evaluations. They cause anxiety. You are doing it to make sure you have a paper trail. Feedback should come more often and in a more humanized way, not a checklist. Find ways to give more feedback with less anxiety. Do not base pay on performance.

Start every meeting with two things, a pulse check at the beginning of meetings - celebrations or accolades. Start each meeting with good news, gratitude, even simple things.

There was discussion on progressive reviews. There is a legal reason for doing these, but it is a mistake. The root of all violence on this planet is punishment.

Mr. Kroop said 70% of the businesses in Hamden have 10 or fewer employees. How do you adapt these rules to small businesses. How do small business owners find the time.

Look at Human Resources policies. Is your business working without a mission or a purpose? Whether you have 5 or 500 employees, ask what do we do here, how can we be the best, etc., called the hedgehog concept.

Mr. Brummer talked about political groups of all races and creeds, coming together for a common goal and never having conflict. People need to know what the goal is. Everyone needs to know what the common purpose is.

Mr. Kroop mentioned leadership. Some owners start a small business which then expands, and they do not know how to manage their employees.

Community Mediation has been called in to a school where they have teachers with black eyes, and disagreements between teachers and administration. They also do facilitation, and worked with Mayor Jackson as facilitators for the Sandy Hook advisory board. They also do training in customer service, communications, conflict resolution, etc. all get tailored to what you need.

Mr. Brummer also commented that people have needs, such as fun, love, work and freedom. Businesses have needs such as identity, purpose, energy and expression. If you have a bad employee and are not meeting each others needs, talk about it, and if that doesn't work doing it from a compassionate place, this comes to an end.

There was discussion about awards and celebrations versus rewards, which are after the fact.

Performance evaluations are deeply flawed in their approach. Ask yourself why you are doing them and is it accomplishing anything. It should be about feedback

There was discussion on 180 and 360 evaluations, which can be great experiences for employees.

Community Mediation can offer supervision and training to small businesses. They are having a workshop at the end of June. Mr. Brummer distributed pertinent material.

4. Report of the Director

Commissioner Giannini has been in the hospital but seems to be doing better.

5. Old Businesses

- Mr. Kroop mentioned that Business Expo will be held next Wednesday, April 16th at the soccer place on Sherman Avenue. Mr. Kroop will be out of town, but he has several staff people to cover the table.
- The moratorium on Quinnipiac is still being discussed. A Quinnipiac development is being discussed for Whitney Avenue.
- At last month's meeting a gentleman spoke on energy savings and got a couple of contacts through the meeting.
- There will be a panel on business loans at our May meeting.
- The Commission needs to update its long range plan incorporating tax incentives, grants, loans, etc. The current plan expires on 12/31/14. We have to begin work on the plan and the budget for the next three years. Perhaps there will be some changes
- The Best Video building was purchased by John Weinstein, owner of Adler Travel. Best Video will remain a tenant in a smaller space and has signed a five year lease. Adler Travel will move into 1/3 of what was Best Video.
- There is no news on the Stop & Shop property at Dixwell and Putnam Avenues. We get calls about Walmart moving into that space. There is no evidence of this in P&Z or building or anywhere else in Town Hall.
- A Quinnipiac intern will be starting in Economic Development in June and will be there for the summer. Mr. Kroop is looking forward to that.
- We will have more speakers in the fall, perhaps an energy fair and another session on the Affordable Care Act.

6. New Businesses

Mr. Kroop said at our May 13th meeting we will have a panel on how to apply for a small business loan. We will have a representative from Quinnipiac Bank, someone from the Small Business Administration panel that will be interesting rep from Q bank, someone from SBA, and Richard Pearce of the Business Assistance Center.

7. Project Updates: Redevelopment, Openings, Etc.

- Mr. Kroop said the former tobacco shop and nail salon at the corner of Colonial Drive and Whitney Avenue will be demolished and a medical office building will occupy the lot.
- The old factory building at the corner of Mather and Dixwell will come down in the first half of 2014. The property will have a 10,000 square foot retail building with a strip center behind it.
- Mr. Kroop held a Health Care cluster jointly with the Chamber of Commerce. About 40 people attended this meeting at Larson Place. Mr. Kroop met the family that owns the medical office building at 2200 Whitney Avenue and the former St. Raphael's surgical center on Whitney Avenue. They are interested in working with Economic Development to bring doctors to Town. A real estate cluster might be next, then a finance and insurance cluster, . A lot of this is leading into the redo of our long range plan.
- The business incubator space will progress into some construction in mid to end of May, and full construction will start during the summer, and take 8-9 months, opening about a year from now. We will market to 20 new businesses to occupy the building. Once construction is six months in, he will get more serious about the leasing and marketing. The commission should address how our programs can get businesses into the center.
- There was an article in paper about a luxury hotel going in on Sherman Avenue,. Mr. Kroop said a hotel was approved several years ago by Planning & Zoning and the approval was sold off. Mr. Kroop is not sure what hotel it will be. We will have a Nilo hotel where Centerville Lumber was. An application for a luxury hotel is coming to zoning, for a 25 acre parcel with wetlands near Cascade banquet facility.
- The RFP went out for the former Michael Whalen Middle School. There were 2-3 serious developers at the walk through. Proposals are due on April 25th. The positive report on the interior environmental issues should help.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
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