



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 Special Meeting on Wednesday, November 19, 2014, at 5:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center. The following issues were discussed:

Commissioners in Attendance: Mr. Sachetti, Mr. Zambrano, Mr. DeNicola, Mr. Rolnick, Ms. Gretencord, Mr. Moses, Mr. Rodriguez, Ms. Sacco, Mr. Good

Commissioners Absent: Mr. DelGrego, Mr. Diaz

Others in Attendance: Town Planner Leslie Creane, Commission Clerk Tobin

1. Call to order 5:30

Mr. Sachetti called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. Reading and Approval of minutes of the Meeting of October 14, 2014

Mr. Zambrano made a motion to approve the minutes of October 14, 2014. Mr. Moses seconded the motion. The vote was eight in favor. Ms. Gretencord abstained.

3. Report of the Director

Mr. Kroop met with new commissioners to bring them up to date on the commission's business. He said there was very little activity in October.

Financial Report

On the encumbered funds report, a \$5,000 grant was given to Burt processing. Moler went in to business across from the Memorial Town Hall. The grant was forgone because the required minimum dollars were not spent. Outstanding currently is Renee Bauer, whose expansion will be completed in the near future. PhilMor Realty was not given a grant, but Mr. Kroop added it to the list in order to track what they are doing. Bauer was transferred to Page 1 because the funds have not been spent to date. Mr. Kroop said a small amount was spent on marketing/website. There are \$419,577 in unencumbered funds available for grants if we so choose. Accounts Receivable in the microloan program shows \$46,566.58. There are four loans on the books and all are up to date.

4. Old Businesses

5. New Businesses

Town Planner Leslie Creane – Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

Mr. Sachetti introduced Leslie Creane, who said she was asked to join the meeting tonight to discuss the Plan of Conservation and Development. The Town is required to update the “Plan” every ten years, as are all municipalities in the State of Connecticut. She is collecting ideas for what we would like to see Hamden look like in 10-20-100 years from now. The Plan covers not just land use, but programs we would like to see. All kinds of ideas have been put forth, and there are over 100 on the P&Z web site. Ideas have been gathered from the public at events, civic association meetings, boards and commission members, etc. Ms. Creane would like commissioners to fill out the questionnaire she distributed asking what five things they like and dislike about Hamden.

Mr. Zambrano – would like to see the PILOT reimbursement system reversed leaving the onus on the exempt organizations to get reimbursed and others being further curtailed. Mr. Rodriguez mentioned creating a vision. He said we are becoming less of a manufacturing town and more of a eds and meds town. Should we continue to ride that wave? We need guidance. Ms. Creane said if you go on the town website you can go on to the P&Z section and see the long list of ideas and team them up. She said she learned never make one move that doesn't do three things. Ms. Creane said people have come down on different sides of things. Some want a college town, some don't - some want more residential, some don't.

Mr. Kroop mentioned attribute based decisions, both business and non profit, saying focus on or take advantage of the positive attributes of the existing climate. He said for example, Yale creates biotech jobs to keep their students here as opposed to their moving to California or Boston. When you have an operation at Yale, the surgeon probably trained at Yale and rest of staff trained at Quinnipiac.

POCD is the big vision piece for the Town. What do we want to see, where do we want to concentrate our efforts and our money over the next ten years. This is a guiding document. P&Z commissioners can use this in their decision making process asking is this consistent with the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Rolnick said he doesn't think the town gets as much benefit from Quinnipiac as it could. Look at Yale. Things in that area have turned around. Thirty years ago the area was horrible, crime ridden and no one wanted to go there. Now there is a lot of activity in that area. Quinnipiac is in the northern part of town with students all over the place. We have to come up with some sort of mixed use area that abuts the campus, or some way to involve the students and staff in the community.

Mr. Kroop said he grew up in New Haven in a working poor neighborhood and family. He lived near where the race riots were in the late 60's. It was a crazy, chaotic time for a 13 year old. Yale came to the table then and became part of the community because they had to, and then Yale became part of the economy. The Mayor and president of Yale became part of the solution, not part of the problem. They came together to work for a common cause.

Ms. Creane said Yale conducted a survey as to what made students go to Harvard and others to Yale. One of the major reasons was safety. This was done in 1993/1994. She also said Quinnipiac

is a cash flow university as opposed to Yale which has an huge endowment. It is dangerous to compare the two, but that doesn't mean that we don't maximize the advantages.

Ms. Creane has been attending the civic association meetings. Westwoods is talking about Quinnipiac. Dunbar Hill has been talking about the development of southern Hamden, Dixwell Avenue south of the Parkway. In the non civic association meetings they have mentioned the development of Dixwell Avenue south of the Parkway more than anything else. Whitneyville Civic Association talks about access to the reservoir, and what can they do outside of government. This will be addressed in the POCD. Ms. Creane has not spoken to the Spring Glen association. Mr. Moses said Yale needed New Haven, but for the most part, Quinnipiac doesn't necessarily need Hamden. Small businesses benefit from Quinnipiac partly because of the Q Card.

Mr. Kroop said we have to work much harder to develop northern Whitney Avenue. You have to have public support. Mr. Kroop would like to see sewers north of Westwoods Road. How do we get the POCD to be a tool to educate people to develop northern Whitney Avenue. There has to be an educational process as to how utilities impact northern Hamden. Ms. Creane said the regulations are a fluid document. There have been some recent zone changes in the Mather Street area, from T4 to T5, which allows more development. These are mixed use zones with three story structures allowed in T4 and five story structures allowed in T5. The zoning regulations adopted in 2010 provide an enormous potential for growth. Ms. Creane said there is opportunity for more development in Hamden.

Ms. Creane said slowing down traffic is better for economic development as is on street parking and making areas feel safe for walkers. Mass transit is of great interest to both the young and the empty nesters.

Ms. Creane said the new POCD will be different than anything that we have ever done or any municipality across the country has ever done. One volume will have data and things that will never change - raw data, things that most people don't want to read. The second volume will be the work plan, which is where the ideas will be, plus how to make them work. The Plan of Conservation and Development must be completed by June 30, 2015, including going through the necessary approvals.

Mr. Kroop said we should try to make recommendations to feed into the goals of the POCD. Bad economic development is to obsess about Stop & Shop at the corner of Putnam Avenue being empty. The median income in that area \$39,000. The median income in northern Hamden \$85,000. The demographics in southern Hamden needs to be improved if we want to attract business.

Ms. Creane said Planning & Zoning is not allowed to consider taxes or the effect on the school system when reviewing applications. Mr. Kroop said our schools are only 80%. Ridge Hill school is only 55% full. The Middle school is at 70% of its capacity. Hamden High School is 80%. We have room for more kids without effecting taxes. 18% of Hamden households have kids in the public school system. You need people to grow the economy.

Ms. Creane said crime is an issue on many levels and it is a police issue. The design of a community has a huge impact on safety. One way streets are less safe than two way streets, both for

crime purposes and driving issues. Mr. Kroop said he received a disturbing message from a real estate broker, saying houses aren't selling in Hamden because of all the crime they read about. Mr. Kroop forwarded this to the Mayor. If this isn't true, we should be talking about it.

Mr. DeNicola asked how do we get the residents to accept the Town's vision. Ms. Creane said this is the reason she is asking residents for ideas. Sometimes it is about education.

Mr. Kroop said he has had two association of association meetings and he encourages commissioners to come to these meetings. We must educate the residents and have more growth. Mr. Good said we must show the residents concrete examples must be shown because some people want to keep the Town exactly the way it is.

Mr. Sachetti said there are so many areas and so many opinions. We must look at the entire Town and prioritize how we should spend the tax dollars. The “not in my back yard issue was also addressed.

Mr. Kroop said the problems that everyone is talking about require strong leadership on multiple levels. We need to be out there to say it makes no difference if you put a law office in what used to be a residential home. Hopefully the leadership will be part of the POCD.

Review and Update of Economic Development Ordinance

Mr. Kroop said he needs the commission's support to vote on the Ordinance. There is a money aspect and a regulatory aspect – i.e. state statutes. When the plan expires we normally vote on a new plan with the focus on the financial aspect. We also need the tools to offer the tax incentives, which is done via Ordinance. Because of Mr. Kroop's health issues, he asked that the ordinance be extended for six months from December 31, 2014 to June 30, 2015, to give him time to get his health back on track, and also to be in line with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development. The Town Attorney went through the state statutes to find out if there have been any changes in the statutes that needed to be reflected in our Ordinance. There were many changes which he sent out to commissioners in a typical attorney marked up document. Extra uses became eligible under the statutes including a broader range of eligible activities. The benefits have changed regarding the number of years, more flexibility, percentages of tax abatements, etc. At its next meeting the Legislative Council will act to extend the current ordinance to 6/30/15.

Mr. Sachetti requested a motion to extend the Economic Development Ordinance in accordance with current statutes. Ms. Gretencord so moved. Mr. Zambrano seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

6. Project Updates: Redevelopment, Openings, Etc.

Mr. Kroop said he has finally been successful in getting the administrative position in his office made permanent. This is a 25 hour per week position.

Locktite Update – The commission voted to ask for the money back from the self storage company. The deal closed, and we got \$24,000 back. The new owners of Locktite are the same folks that are investing in the self storage facility on Putnam Avenue.

Mr. Zambrano asked about Mr. Kroop's salary. Mr. Kroop wanted to reserve comment. He said the Mayor declined to put Mr. Kroop's contract forward because he is working on an Ordinance to protect all non-bargaining unit employees. He wants to ensure that for example, if the tax collector gets a raise, non bargaining employees will get a raise. Mr. Kroop wants to see what this looks like before he comments on it.

Mr. Kroop said there is a lot going on. The incubator project in Newhall will go out to bid after the first of the year. Construction will begin in March or April. The RWA is working on some of the remediation.

Regarding Rochford Field and Peter Villano Park (formerly Mill Rock Park). Construction on Rochford Field starts tomorrow.

The old middle school information will be discussed at the next meeting of the commission. There are still several approvals to meet. Mr. Kroop is confident we are on the right path.

Mr. Kroop said he has been working closely with Nancy Dudcik of the Hamden Chamber. He is trying to cut down unnecessary stresses, and one area is his role with the Chamber. He has to have a major role, but can't go to all of their events. They have a "solopreneur" business committee that needs some help. He will co-manage that committee with someone else and be involved with home based businesses that want to expand out of their homes. It is shocking how many business have the potential to come into the real estate market place.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Zambrano made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Rolnick seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
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