



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 on Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center. The following issues were discussed:

Commissioners in Attendance: Armando Rodriguez, Anthony Sachetti, Don Moses, Bob Zambrano, Ken Good, Rachel Gretencord, Steve Diaz, Jennifer Sacco, David DeNicola

Commissioners Excused: Anthony DelGrego, Steve Rolnick

Others in Attendance: Director of Economic & Community Development Dale Kroop, SCSU Intern Pam, Commission Clerk Gerry Tobin

1. Call to order

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

2. Review Minutes of January 13, 2015

Mr. Zambrano made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 13th meeting, Mr. Good seconded the motion. The vote was eight in favor, Ms. Gretencord abstained.

3. Report of the Director

Mr. Kroop introduced intern Pam, an SCSU student in the Geography Department who will be working with him for the spring semester.

Mr. Kroop said there is not too much to discuss regarding the financial report. The incentive for Precision Grinding has been approved by the Legislative Council. \$31,983.00 is encumbered for the grant program. The last page of the report shows the loan payments. One loan had been two months behind and is now one month behind. Everyone else is up to date. We have \$44,364.51 accounts receivable as of January 31, 2014 and \$419,278 in unencumbered funds. That amount will go down some before June 30th.

4. Old Businesses

January is tax payment month, and Mr. Kroop said the lines have been out the door. He has met with the assessor and the tax collector but they have been swamped. Ms. Regan is trying to assemble data regarding the tax incentive program and she is pretty close to having a report prepared, both historical and over the last few years. He is also getting a report from Richard Pearce regarding the BAC.

Mr. Kroop will provide the commissioners with an analysis on micro loan program. During his tenure, there has only been about ten loans. Three of those were written off. Pam will upgrade the website to include all of the other loan programs out there to show people what their options are.

Mr. Moses asked if the BAC provides monthly reports. Mr. Kroop replied that he speaks to Mr. Pearce on a regular basis, and he submits reports once every three months. We used to have students track and report, but this year we haven't had the manpower to monitor it regularly. Mr. Pearce has a good database.

Mr. Kroop said he emailed the subcommittees outlines, but he told commissioners to feel free to talk to each other.

Along with the program and performance, Mr. Kroop has been speaking to civic associations. So far, he went informally to Whitneyville Civic. Last week he was at Spring Glen Civic Association, and Mr. Zambrano and Mr. DeNicola were also there. They are concerned about development including the Walgreen's location. The new date for Westwoods Civic is Monday, March 9th. On Thursday, March 12th he goes back to Whitneyville to talk about what the commission does including the BAC and the Corporation.

Regarding 1253 Whitney Avenue, the people that own the Yoga Studio on Putnam Avenue purchased the church and the office building on the corner of Putnam and Whitney Avenues. They have renovated the building and leased it back to the church. They are trying to replicate The Grove in New Haven. He will have yoga, massage, contra dancing, and cowork space. People join by paying a membership fee. Laine Driscoll is the owner of the building. Mr. Kroop had a chance to talk about the plan. People that start there might end up at the incubator space. Mr. Kroop will go back there to speak, and will also be visiting a few churches.

Cluster meetings will be scheduled shortly and Pam will be updating the website. They will have a real estate cluster, healthcare, etc. Mr. Kroop is trying to get information and feedback. He was to contact realtors to speak to the commission regarding the state of the economy and what they specialize in. He invited Mr. Proto from the Proto Group to come in March or April to talk about the market in general. He has asked Steve Press to talk about the commercial real estate market.

The Hamden Regional Chamber of Commerce is having their Business Expo at the soccer place on Sherman Avenue on Wednesday, April 15th from 12:30-4:30 followed by Business Afterhours. Economic Development will have a table. This event draws about 1500 people. Mr. Diaz will be there, and they will have a special Veterans job fair in addition to other information on companies that might be hiring. The following week on 4/23, the Quinnipiac Chamber which is now affiliated with the New Haven Chamber are having a Business Expo, and he expects a bigger crowd. That one is from 2:00 - 7:30 at the Best Western Hotel at Exit 12. They charge \$450 for a table.

Mr. Kroop reported that Sharon Regan in his office is a permanent employee of the Town as of yesterday.

The Town is going for a bond rating for \$125 million in pension obligation bonds. The rating companies all do it differently. Moody's, Standard and Poors and Fitch are the three rating agencies. The rating companies demanded the Town do these bonds or they would reduce our ratings. The bonds have to earn 8% and will pay investors 3.5%. The agreement mandates the Town to make the

payments in the budget. Last year Hamden was referred to as stable with a poor outlook. This year Fitch upgraded Hamden to stable with a decent outlook. Standard and Poors made nice comments about the local economy. We haven't had a major loss of jobs except for the Stop & Shop closing. The bonding companies meet or speak with the Mayor, Finance Director and Mr. Kroop. No one from the Legislative Council participates.

There has been no word on the Putnam Place bankruptcy.

U-Haul is trying to purchase property behind Putnam Place, adjacent to their current space.

5. New Businesses

Mr. Kroop is planning to roll out a new program with Nancy Dudcik of the Chamber focused on a new committee relating to solopreneurs and home based businesses. Home based businesses might have needs related to zoning. Solopreneurs might need a small office space. After his health issues last summer, Mr. Kroop removed himself from all of the Chamber committees, but now will chair this committee. They will have an event to start bringing these people out.

6. Project Updates: Redevelopment, Openings, Etc.

- Mr. Kroop reported that Auto Zone is still in the mix for the property next to Bed Bath & Beyond. Weather has prevented them from doing due diligence on the site.
- The Tagliatella family purchased 100 Skiff Street and will eventually build apartments there. They have done some further remediation of the property. They plan to work on another apartment development first.
- The developer for old Middle School will be announced in the early spring. This will be a residential development..
- The fields are pretty much on schedule for opening in the spring of 2016. Villano Park might be ready this fall.
- There is no word on the Spring Glen Liquor store move. Mr. Kroop mentioned that liquor stores are per capita based.
- Radio Shack is closing. They have been on the verge of bankruptcy for a long time. Sprint plans to take over some of their stores, but not the Hamden Mart location. That is a small space, and will become the only vacancy in the Mart or Plaza.

Mr. Diaz mentioned a program announced through CT Works which received a contract through the State Department of Labor. This is a National Emergency Grant which is focused on dislocated workers, and the long term unemployed (27 weeks or more) to provide on the job training. Depending on the size of the company, they would be reimbursed 50-75% of the salary during the training program. This is called a STEM program to provide training in science, technology, engineering and math. Mr. Kroop said the owner of Precision Grinding might be interested in this program.

Rich Evans former credit person at Bankwell, is now at Start Bank. He invited Mr. Kroop to meet with him and his boss – former New Haven Mayor John DeStefano. They discussed possible small business loans.

Budget Deficit – Mr. Kroop said th money. Mr, Kroop is under contract with the Town, so he has to be paid his salary no matter what. He feels he will be short this year, possibly up to \$50,000.

Mr. Sachetti asked about package store signage. Mr. Kroop said with our input, the percentage of temporary signage has been revised. Businesses were complaining that they were getting violations for having more than the allowed temporary signage. 50% window coverage is now allowed for temporary signage, compared to the previous 10-15%. There was further discussion.

Mr. Good asked if anyone saw the article in the Register on February 2nd about crime in Town. For years, crime was under reported, and reporting is currently more accurate, so it looks like crime is going up. Mr. Kroop will invite the Police Chief to speak on this subject at a future meeting.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Moses made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Gretencord seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk

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