



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, September 8, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center. The following issues were discussed:

Attendance: Ms. Gretencord, Mr. Rodriguez, Mr. Zambrano, Mr. DelGrego, Mr. Sachetti, Mr. Rolnick, Mr. Good, Mr. DeNicola

Excused: Ms. Sacco, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Moses

Others in Attendance: Ms. Bonadies, Ms. Regan, Mr. Kroop, Ms. Tobin

1. Call to Order

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

2. Review Minutes of August 11, 2015

Mr. DelGrego made a motion to accept the minutes of August 11th as submitted. Mr. Zambrano seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Guest - Mayor Curt Leng

Mr. Sachetti welcomed Mayor Leng to the meeting and thought a Q & A would be appropriate. Mayor Leng mentioned that Mr. Sachetti is the longest serving commission chair in the Town. Mr. Sachetti has been serving as chair since 1998.

Mayor Leng was asked how the Mayor's Night Out meetings are going. Mayor Leng said they are going very well. He has been meeting constituents in various areas of town, and people from other areas attend. They hear about 25 concerns at each meeting.

Mr. Kroop asked if people bring up Economic Development. Mayor Leng said they had a meeting at Three Brothers Diner and people brought up the various vacancies in Town. He explained that Hamden's vacancy rate is about 7%, and we have fewer vacancies than surrounding towns. People are amazed at the reasons for some of the vacancies, Toy's R Us in particular.

The Mayor's Office receives universally positive feedback on increasing constituent services and getting back to people in a timely manner. Arts Recreation and Culture programs and all Town Center Park Town programs, receive good comments, even from people that live outside of Hamden. We and this commission can parlay that into some positivity about the Town.

Mr. DelGregio commended the Mayor and Speaker Brendan Sharkey on getting some of the Quinnipiac owned properties back on the tax rolls. Mr. DelGregio expressed concern about so many "Bid Waivers.

Regarding Quinnipiac, Mayor Leng said there is still no application in Planning & Zoning for the new beds that they are supposed to build. Mr. Rodriguez doesn't like the nit picking between the Town and the University. It seems New Haven has a better relationship with UNH than Hamden does with Quinnipiac. 60 of the over 100 houses Quinnipiac owns were considered dorms. They are not dorms.

On the question of bidding, there was recently an article in the newspaper for the purchase of a number of vehicles. Mayor Leng credited Ms. Ramuni with being a good reporter. The no bid limit is \$10,000. 90-95 percent of the the Town purchased are off of the state bid list, cooperative bid list, etc. Every car that was purchased was priced lower than the state bid price and they were purchased from a local business. There is a time for bid waivers and times where it is illogical to bid. There are other considerations that might add to the cost of an item bringing it even higher, even though the quoted price would fall under the no bid maximum of \$10,000.

Mayor Leng mentioned that the Town's bond rating has been upgraded and there has been a budget surplus two years in a row. Mr. Kroop explained the ramifications of a slight increase in the Town's bond rating. Mayor Leng said that we have been buying bond insurance for the last couple of years, but this year that was not necessary, and the Town was able to save \$100,000. The financial community is pleased with the steps we have been taking.

Mr. DelGregio brought up the trees on Rocky Top that need to be trimmed. He also mentioned the houses that Quinnipiac has taken off of the tax rolls.

Mr. Kroop spoke about the possibility of the Town taking a proactive roll in helping Quinnipiac with their master plan. The plan should be a joint master plan.

Regarding Quinnipiac's economic impact on the Town, we should promote asset based economic development. Quinnipiac could share that information with us.

Mayor Leng mentioned some of the positive impacts Quinnipiac has on our community. He mentioned the public service interns, the members of the sports teams that come out to help at various events, the polling institute that has put Hamden on the map.

Mr. Rolnick said there is some long term potential to work with Quinnipiac on economic development in northern Hamden. Mr. Kroop mentioned that would require sewers.

Mr. Rolnick asked about Laurel View. He said the situation looks bad. What was done to find potential operators. He feels everything should be laid out as to what was done and how we arrived at the current situation.

Mayor Leng said about three years ago revenue from the golf course stopped coming in. Mr. Menchetti responded that there was no money. Calls to other municipalities found similar issues and some towns pay for some portion of the golf course expenses. They tried to work out a deal and they seemed to be getting closer. For one reason or another that didn't happen.

The Town is not paying for Laurel View. Mr. Menchetti has a contract on the golf side to 2022. They offered him the opportunity to open the 19th hole and perhaps hold some events, if he was willing to pay the Town.

Mr. Rolnick said he knows about the economy and golf, but he is saying none of the dealings on Laurel View have come out. No one knows how it ended up where it ended up.

Mayor Leng said in order to do improvements to the building (end of last summer) we need to do an evaluation of the building. The golf course will operate and Mr. Menchetti will run caterine for a year and a half. There was a \$98,000 water bill on which Mr. Menchetti has paid close to \$40,000. *The* back rent is 430,000. We have a sworn affidavit that he is on the line for the money owed in the contracts. We also have collateral. The equipment is fully owned by him. Mr. Zambrano said he doesn't have the appropriate equipment to take care of the greens.

Mr. Kroop mentioned that he will be having an Association of Associations meeting in the next couple of months, and that would be a perfect forum to bring up bond saving and the University information.

Mayor Leng said there is a case report on the firing of a gun near Russo Drive. As to why people are not arrested at rowdy parties, Officers tthat go on site have the ability to make judgement calls. They can break up a party peacefully and everyone goes home safely. Chief Wydra's plan is that he will be handling things such as underage drinking, parties that run at socially unacceptable hours. He expects police officers to be tougher. Quinnipiac properties have a residence advisor, a landscaper, etc. and the students know they are at risk of getting pulled back to campus. Students that live in some of the privately owned properties do not feel that pressure.

Mr. Sachetti brought up the fund that the Commission has for offering tax incentives. The fund is doing well now, but we can see that eventually it will run out of money. He mentioned certain challenges we have attracting businesses to Hamden and asked what Mayor Leng sees in the future. Mayor Leng said we will have to reseed the fund. CDBG funds have dwindled, and the Town made funds available to allow us to do more. Mr. Kroop said however this is funded in the future, it should not have an expiration date and the commission needs the freedom to control the money.

Mayor Leng said he would like to sit with this commission again to decide what the Department should look like.

Mr. Zambrano asked why we don't charge for the Business Assistance Center. Mr. Kroop responded that we have never been able to get anyone to pay. There was further discussion on the BAC. Mr. Kroop said there will be a job training element to this. Mr. Diaz will work with the Department of Labor on how to do a resume etc.

3. Report of the Director

Mr. Kroop reported there has not been a lot of activity since last month. Mr. Kroop asked Ms. Regan to follow up with Precision Grinding. We have one grant to hand out. The balance in the account is approximately \$238,000, which includes \$4,000 that has been set aside for a street scape project. The few remaining loans are paying on time (two day care centers).

Regarding the Business and Career Center at the Library, a series of workshops will be held with Mr. Pearce in the Friends of the Library Room at Miller. Workshops will be held between 10/7 and 11/4

evenings from 6-9. More information will be available at a later date. Mr. Zambrano asked if we are going to charge for this. Mr. Kroop said no, no one has ever paid.

Mr. Sachetti asked if there was a deadline for Precision Grinding to get their work done. Mr. Kroop said their project was approved by the Legislative Council on 2/3/15 and expires on 2/3/16.

4. Old Businesses

- The unemployment office on Marne Street is closing.
- On Thursday 9/10 at 1:30, there will be a ribbon cutting at the Renee Bauer Law Firm, located at 2531 Whitney Avenue
- Express Care – a ribbon cutting will take place at 4:00 at 1650 Dixwell Avenue across from Haig Street. They formerly leased at Hamden Commons and now have purchased a property.
- Moonrocks Cookies is going in next to Ibiza.
- Advanced Auto finished the demolition on the corner of Mather and Dixwell and plan to be ready to open in the spring
- Auto Zone is moving forward next to Bed Bath and Beyond
- Home Care Specialty Services opened at 2795 Whitney Avenue
- Wooden Tap is still on tap for Chili's

5. New Businesses

6. Project Updates: Redevelopment, Openings, Etc.

7. Adjournment

Ms. Gretencord made a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeNicola seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk