



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

Curtis Eatman
Interim Director

MINUTES of the Hamden Economic Development Commission Special Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98836657909?pwd=YlozSFpkUTBNOVFOVEVyNEZCWnNFZz09>

Meeting ID: 988 3665 7909

PW: revenue

Call in: 1 646-558-8656

Minutes: The Economic Development Commission, Town of Hamden, held a Regular Meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, April 13, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

Commissioners in Attendance: Mr. Sachetti, Mr. DelGrego, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Watkins, Mr. Good, Mr. Smolnik, Mr. Hughey, , Mr. Moses, Ms. Sacco, Mr. Rolnick

Commissioners Excused: Mr. DeNicola

Others in Attendance: Hamden Regional Chamber of Commerce Director Ms. Dudchik, Acting Economic & Neighborhood Development Interim Director Mr. Eatman, Energy Efficiency Coordinator Ms. Ms. Schomaker, Assessor's Office Representative Ms. Forvil, Engineering Department GIS Coordinator Mr. Kinlock, Commission Clerk Ms. Tobin

1. Call to Order

Mr. Sachetti called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

2. Review Minutes of March 9, 2021

Mr. DelGrego made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2021 meeting. Mr. Good seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

3. Nancy Dudchik, Hamden Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Sachetti introduced Nancy Dudchik from the Hamden Chamber. Introductions were made by everyone present. Ms. Dudchik commented on the business climate in time. She said it has been many years since she has spoken with this group. This is her 17th year at the Chamber. She said there was much more personal contact in 2004 before all of the technology and social networking. When new businesses come to town, the Chamber brings people together and makes sure they are making referrals to each other. A partnership was formed with the Midstate Chamber. The Hamden Chamber is a stand

alone non-profit founded in 1925 and governed by a board of directors. What happened to the business community during the pandemic happened to them. She had to lay off paid staff, but she has been in the office every day and is now in a support mode. She spoke with the Tow regarding the expansion of outdoor dining. She is the voice of the business community and wants to continue supporting them.

On April 23rd the Governor will speak to the Chamber at 9:00 a.m on Zoom. Mr. Eatman serves on the Government Affairs Committee and works in conjunction with our partners and with the Midstate Chamber, keeping more eyes on businesses. The Chamber works side by side with Meriden to grow networking reach. Chamber members can join Midstate for \$125 per year, and visa versa. It is still unknown when Business After Hours will be able to resume. Businesses want to get back to in person connections. The Chamber might have parking lot events beginning in May.

Ms. Dudchik mentioned the Hamden Fest, which was held in 2019 and brought 10,000 people to Town Center Park, businesses, arts and culture and members of the public. This replaced the Chamber Expo. The book fair, road race and arts and crafts displays will resume. The Hamden Fest is planned for September 18th, and Ms. Dudchik hopes the CDC Guidelines will allow this to happen. This event will grow year after year.

Mr. Sachetti said the unemployment rate is higher in Connecticut than in the rest of the Country and asked which industries are suffering the most. Ms. Dudchik replied restaurants. She has been sharing on the Chamber's Facebook page which restaurants are looking for employees. The shift in work will be long lasting. Businesses are leaving leased spaces for smaller spaces and work at home options. People are moving into health care jobs such as CNAs and nurses. Mr. Good said 42% of jobs can be done remotely. Managers were originally opposed but now it has been proven more productive. Ms. Dudchik said people she talks to find it a workable option.

Mr. Sachetti thanked Ms. Dudchik for her presentation on behalf of the Commission and said he hopes she will continue to work with the Commission.

4. Opportunity Zones

Andrew Kinlock, Engineering Department and Nancy Forvil, Assessor's Office

Mr. Sachetti introduced Ms. Forvil and Mr. Kinlock and welcomed them to the meeting. Mr. Kinlock said they were tasked with highlighting opportunity zones and showing geographically other types of opportunities. Tract 1655 is a federally designated Opportunity Zone. Mr. Forvil has been researching the Hamden Town Charter regarding economic development. The goal is to strengthen Hamden's manufacturing and commercial tax base, setting a foundation for future growth.

NRZ zones are shown to revitalize neighborhoods and are designated by the Town's legislative body. Enterprise Zones are established under Connecticut CG 32-79 to attract redevelopment and renewed investment and job opportunities based on certain criteria. Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZs) are located in distressed communities where new investment under certain conditions may be eligible for preferred tax treatment and are an economic development tool to spur economic development and job creation. They provide tax incentives for developers. Census tract 1655 in the lower Dixwell Avenue area has overlapping QOZ, Enterprise and Neighborhood Revitlization Zones.

Mr. Kinlock shared his screen to show mapping of the area with the transportation available. This is a densely populated area with a major state route and many bus lines. It shows CT DOT road designations based on traffic volume. Zoning within Tract 1655 is mixed use, R4-medium density, R5-high density, M-mostly in the industrial park, T4, T5 and NC. Businesses by type were shown to establish a general feel for who exists in Hamden. The relationship of zoning to business distribution and the Plan of Conservation and Development were noted. The business density across the contingent Dixwell Avenue census tracts including the Hamden Plaza Area (165801) and below the Wilbur Cross Parkway to Putnam Avenue (656) were noted.

1655 is the focus tract. Mr. Kinlock and Ms. Forvil are trying to create a base line for what exists. They are looking at areas of future research and development and a list of businesses before and after Covid. They want to incorporate socio-demographic information and establish a date and then track the health of the businesses going forward. The Plan of Conservation and Development is a baseline for the Town for the next ten years, allowing informed decisions to be made based on available data.

Mr. Smolnik asked if the business inventory cited is from the Assessor's Office. Ms. Forvil said she is collecting data on business types and she will be getting more precise, identifying owners and their struggles and forming new collaborations. Mr. Smolnik asked if he could get a pipeline into the data base. Ms. Forvil replied There is an internal data base. She will provide as much information as possible.

Mr. Moses addressed a question to Mr. Kinlock asking if they have done a needs assessment to determine how to find the highest and best use for the QOZ. Mr. Kinlock replied that he would need a cleaner and more complete data set and a better handle on information coming in to the Assessor. Ms. Forvil said she and Mr. Kinlock have discussed this and it is on their agenda for this year. Mr. Good asked if the 16 manufacturing businesses mentioned are all in the industrial Park. Mr. Kinlock replied not all. Some businesses got zoning variances and are in other locations. Mr. Good asked about the Sherman Avenue. Mr. Kinlock said that and other areas are not mapped yet. Mr. Good asked if any of these manufacturers support large industries like aerospace. Ms. Forvil said they will try to get additional data and are open to adding the information. There were no additional questions and Mr. Sachetti thanked Ms. Forvil and Mr. Kinlock for their presentation. Mr. Smolnik said that Ms. Forvil and Mr. Kinlock did well on the surprise grilling by Commissioners.

5. Report from Energy Efficiency Coordinator Kathleen Schomaker

Ms. Schomaker began by saying we are not really looking for who is manufacturing electric vehicles (EVs). We are focused on preparing for EVs traveling in our area. One part of that program is to provide access to charging stations. The Volkswagen Settlement and Federal funding and certain grant funds will be coming available. One of the primary initiatives is to improve the air quality and how we approach the issue of reducing contaminants from the air, especially in densely populated areas. We need to have a plan in place to install EV service equipment for private vehicles, car share, buses and shuttles. We need to think about a shuttle system to serve all people who don't need to drive a car everywhere. We need access for all kinds of EVs located around Town on municipal, public and commercial property. We need businesses, and Chamber and this Commission to be thinking about this. An inventory of the Town fleet is planned. Other commissions and other partners are working on

this. Education on both the hard and software is needed. We need to figure out how to handle traffic, parking, etc.

In response to Mr. Moses, Ms. Schomaker said they will get training in planning over the next few months. She has been working with a couple that have been training. Training programs are paid for with grant funds. There is no date for the training as yet but she will let Mr. Sachetti and Mr. Eatman know once she finds out. Mr. Good asked how much funding is coming from the Volkswagen settlement. Ms. Schomaker said in the vicinity of \$10 million that is in a trust and will be allocated for EV infrastructure over a period of ten years.

6. Report of the Interim Director Curtis Eatman

Mr. Eatman advised the Commission of budget figures in the Mayor's budget presentation to the Legislative Council. Mr. Eatman prepared a budget totaling \$404,230. He explained that \$193,000 was for Regular Salaries; \$60,000 for Contract Services/Grants; \$68,000 for marketing and other consultants; \$60,000 for the Hamden Economic Development Corporation. There was another amount in the \$20,000 range for a grant writer. The Mayor reduced his request by 17% to \$336,230 and removed the grant writer and added it to Community Services. Budget deliberations are ongoing.

Mr. Eatman thanked the Commission for its recommendation of the Tax Incentive Plan. He mentioned a successful tour of the Opportunity Zone with a developer, who still appears to be interested. Mayor Leng and Dan Smolnik were also on the tour. Mr. Eatman contacted CT Main Street regarding the use of tax incremental financing. Ideas were and will continue to be explored. He is planning another tour of the Opportunity Zone with other potential businesses. He will send their letter of support for distribution with the minutes.

There was further discussion on the Departmental budget, which is being reviewed by the Council. Commissioners have the right to make recommendations to the Council. Mr. Moses said he has been on the Commission for eight or nine years. The Commission was aware that the EDC had contract services for its office. Why are we paying an outside entity for something we have done in the past. We know nothing about the HEDC. Mr. Eatman said the Finance Director receives an external audit on regarding the HEDC. The HEDC provides technical guidance and shields the Town from legal matters on redevelopment projects. Mr. Eatman said going forward, the Department's budget will be prepared in consultation with this Board. The \$68,000 helps the organization to do some things that we really can't do, such as tax lien sales, negotiations, etc. The Council requires additional information and that will be provided. Mr. Moses would like to know what the \$60,000 might encompass. Mr. Sachetti will work with Mr. Eatman on that. Mr. Good wondered when shovels will go in the ground for the property that was just granted a tax abatement. Mr. Eatman said the tax abatement is in the Economic Development Committee of the Council. It needs four out of seven votes to pass out of

Committee and go on the the full Council. Council deliberations have been halted for an unknown period of time. He said the property will be closing soon and they are hoping to have shovels in the ground in May with a contractual deadline of about two years to complete.

Mr. Smolnik asked as we have some traction on the QOZ, what is the time line for investments to go into the QOZ fund and when can the fund be established. Mr. Eatman said the budget provides funds for technology to put together the QOZ Fund.

7. Old Businesses

Mr. Sachetti said a few members were on Zoom with the New Haven Chamber at its monthly meeting with their Economic Development Committee. 60 attendees participated in the round table presented by commercial Realtors®. The meeting was informative and occurs monthly. Mr. Eatman will attend when possible.

Mr. Smolnik reached out to Mr. Sachetti to let him know Hamden doesn't have much presence in the State Department of Economic & Community Development Department regarding film and digital production. We need to spread the word and ensure that Hamden is represented when representatives of this industry are looking for sites in Connecticut for film and digital projects. This kind of exposure has an economic impact on hotels, restaurants, etc.

Mr. Sachetti attended a virtual meeting of the New England Economic Development Association last month regarding diversity in Economic Development in practice. They told of a journey of a particular gentlemen who has striven for inclusiveness in his planning for his future and to have a presence and voice in his community. The importance of diversity and understanding minority businesses was discussed. He said hearing this from someone who lives it really hits home.

8. New Businesses

Mr. DelGrego asked if there is any news on the hotel. Mr. Eatman has heard nothing. He might have information for the next meeting. Roost is no longer there, but it may come back.

Mr. Moses thanked Mr. Eatman for the presentation of his report.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Sachetti asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. DelGrego so moved Mr. Moses seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Submitted by: _____

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