



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 11, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center. The following topics were discussed:

Commissioners in Attendance: Mr. Sachetti, Mr. DelGrego, Mr. Good, Ms. Sacco, Mr. DeNicola, Mr. Smolnik

Commissioners Excused: Ms. Gretencord, Mr. Huston

Commissioners Absent: Mr. Moses, Mr. Rolnick, Mr. Diaz

1. Call to Order

Mr. Sachetti called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Presentation by Regional Economic Xcelleration (REX Development
Five Year Update of Economic Development Strategies for the Region

Ginny Kozlowski and Barbara M of REX Development presented their 2020 Comprehensive Economic Strategy to the Commission for the Towns from Milford to Meriden. They are looking for feedback from the Commission. REX has five subcommittees made up of people from business, non-profits, and the community. Ms. Malmberg said there are no big changes. The five year study shows demands for transportation, workforce and housing. They are working on an inventory of laboratory and office space. The Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce received an ECIC grant and funding from the RWA. Five fellows are doing business outreach, visiting various business. The largest employers remain the same, Yale New Haven Health, Yale University, Medtronix, Covidien, Southern Connecticut State University and Masonic. 49% of our workforce is small businesses.

The same issues exist in workforce as in 2018. Workforce Alliance is reaching out to businesses. Hamden's STEM program receives credit at every meeting Ms. Kozlowski attends. Mr. Kroop said he will do some workforce trades programs at Borough496. Everyone does not need to be on a college track. Mr. DelGrego mentioned that unions have apprenticeships. Ms. Malmberg mentioned that there are jobs waiting for automobile mechanics. There are 18 hotels ready to open in the region. In bigger towns, they are paying \$25 per hour for dishwashers. There are many openings in the hospitality industry. There is a shortage of coders. The Haliburton School is offering a 1-2 year program without paying tuition. Once employed, you pay 17% of your salary per year, and at the end of four years, you are done, even if there is still have a balance.

Housing issues are a huge problem in the region according to Ms. Malmberg. New Haven has 4,000 apartments in the pipeline. Young people with college debt and seniors wanting to downsize are the biggest issues. The South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) has started a housing committee. One idea for seniors is to add an in-law apartment, live in that and rent the big house. Co-housing is also a possibility for some.

Infrastructure is also an issue in the region. There is talk of adding a third tube to the tunnel with traffic flowing one way or the other depending on traffic/time of day. In addition there is consideration of a new ramp on the Hamden side of the tunnel.

There was mention of an expansion of Tweed New Haven or Sikorsky Airports. Two of our senators are against expansion of Tweed.

Mr. Kroop said there are already meetings with Stop and Shop, Partyka and LA Fitness regarding the bridge at Skiff Street over the Wilbur Cross Parkway.

There is no news regarding any major improvements in connectivity. Possible bankruptcy of Frontier is causing their stock to go way down. There was discussion on the Natural Gas pipeline not being large enough for the region and the natural gas facility that has been approved in Meriden, which the neighbors do not want. A delay or cancellation of the natural gas facility in Meriden would force us to go back to oil. That would be a huge step backwards and detrimental to business.

East Haven wants to build high speed internet for all town residents. Hamden talked about doing it on poles. Frontier is part of some of the poles. United Illuminating's ability to do municipal power will help businesses.

The Army Corps of Engineers is doing a study of the Port of New Haven and looking at economic opportunities there. They would have to dredge to a depth of 42 feet.

Mr. Good asked the REX position on tolls. Ms. Kozlowski said since there is not a firm plan, they have no opinion.

Regarding real estate land use and sustainability, brownfield assessment and remediation funding, federal EPA funding will support State funding.

Mr. Kroop mentioned the transfer act was modified in 2019, reducing the time to require audits from three years to one.

REX is working on commercial and stakeholder education; updating collateral and websites, continuing the E-news letter, tourism funding, working with the Central Region on tourism and college student retention.

Mr. Kroop said Connecticut is a donor state and pays \$2,900 in taxes per resident more than we are getting back. We must ensure an accurate population count for the 2020 Census because the Census affects towns financially, The Census Bureau is trying to get people to fill out the forms on line and will mail a paper form. They need workers to knock on doors to get people to participate.

The Workforce Alliance is working with Boards of Education.

Mr. Smolnik asked if there is an inventory of homes that have been abandoned for years. Ms. Kozlowski replied that someone in every town might have an idea, possibly the assessor or the tax collector.

There was a discussion on open space in various towns.

Mr. Sachetti thanked Ms. Kozlowski and Ms. Malmberg for their presentation.

2. Review Minutes of January 14, 2020

Mr. Good made a motion to approve the Minutes of the January 14th meeting. Mr. DeNicola seconded the motion. The vote was five in favor. Ms. Sacco and Mr. DelGREGO abstained.

3. Report of the Director

Mr. Kroop announced there is no change in the budget. \$140,613.18 is available. There have been no serious applications. Mr. Kroop will do some outreach. There will be an expenditure of about \$20,000 for the new website. Mr. Pearce's budget is at \$6,500, which has to last a long time. A new four-week seminar series started last evening at the incubator and the attendees were all new faces. There are three tenants currently in Borough 496.

Mr. Smolnik asked if it would be possible to convert some of the funds to low interest loans. Mr. Kroop explained that there are big problems administering such a plan, and when we did that we have a 50% default rate. The available \$52,000 is for grants only. He also mentioned that Newtown Savings has a tremendous program for micro loans.

Mr. Kroop will be making the rounds at Civic Association and other community meetings regarding changes in zoning regulations to go along with the Plan of Conservation and Development that was approved last fall. A residential zoning update will be done in the spring. Mr. Kroop was at the Spring Glen Civic Association meeting and was asked about High Meadows School. The property is currently zoned R-4. Those present felt there should be no changes to the zoning regulations. They also mentioned there would be more kids in the school system. This Commission will be very involved with Hamden zoning.

At next month's meeting we will have a speaker from Camoin.

Mr. Kroop mentioned that his contract expires in November. He needs help in his office and listed all of the responsibilities that are under his purview and take up his time, including working with Mr. Kops in the Planning Office on zoning changes to comply with the Plan of Conservation and Development, and the Town's possible purchase of the High Meadows property which is now in the study phase, business retention, securing new business, etc. Mr. Kroop has developed a Facebook Page in order to keep people up to date. There has been a wetlands survey, and other studies will include a building inspection, a marketing study, etc. If the Town purchases the property, it would sell it for what it paid plus expenses. If the Town decides not to purchase the property, the State will purchase it. The Town has the option to purchase to June of 2021, with options to extend.

Mr. Kroop would like to have the Director of CT Main Street as a speaker.

- Hop Knot opened in October, and has recently closed. This is a Franchise that is successful in several towns in Connecticut. Apparently there was no promotion and everyone started to quit. There was discussion on the fact that no one seemed to know when it was open.
- Mr. Kroop announced that Pier 1 will close in April. He mentioned that there are very few vacancies in Hamden's shopping centers. He said Hamden's high tax rate hurts the ability to get retail tenants, because they all have to sign triple net leases, effectively paying the Town taxes for the property owners.
- The extra Bon Ton space will become a swimming school with two pools.
- CVS at Dixwell and Putnam will open this winter.
- The trampoline place will open at any time soon.
- Ibiza has expanded into the former Moonrocks space.

4. Old Businesses

There was discussion regarding the new website. Mr. Good reported that ADA is more of a recommendation for websites than a rule. There have been 1,000 lawsuits of websites because they were not compliant with ADA laws. One was successful against the Winn Dixie Supermarket Co. He said Hamden's and the State of Connecticut's websites are not compliant. Mr. Good said there are tools to help you determine if a site is compliant.

7. Adjournment

Mr. DelGrego made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Sacco seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
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