



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

**Curtis Eatman**  
**Interim Director**

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, March 9, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

Commissioners in Attendance: Mr. Sachetti, Mr. Good, Mr. Watkins, Mr. Hughey, Mr. Smolnik, Mr. DeNicola, Mr. DelGrego, Mr. Moses

Commissioners Excused: Ms. Sacco, Mr. Rolnick, Mr. Diaz

1. Call to Order

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

2. Review Minutes of February 9, 2021

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

3. High Meadows Project Update – Walter Morton

The High Meadows School at 825 Hartford Turnpike sits on a 50 acre site in a residential community. The school was vacant for over ten years and was being maintained by the State. The State gave Hamden the opportunity to purchase the property for \$1.7 within two years with a 12 month extension at \$150,000. Two years ago the Town started the process and has been spending Capital dollars to do pre-development work, land, environmental and market studies and reuse scenarios, to find viable development for that property, unlike what has happened at Maselli Farm which still has not been put to use. These studies were to determine if the Town would purchase the property and a developer would come in to purchase the property directly or from the Town. Studies began in January and February of 2020, and were then delayed because of Covid. The Town needs an extension but wants it at no additional cos. A meeting was held with Legislators Looney, Carbrerra and D'Agostino and there has been no decision to date.

The market study revealed that there is a huge need here and across the State for 55 and over options such as independent living, assisted living, senior care etc. 25 of the 50 acres are developable. There have been two options presented, one for a moderate sized 55+ community and the other a

more dense project with some non age restricted units. A developer needs to make the project successful. A Phase II study will review areas of concern. They have done sampling of the soil, water, the rubberized matting and cement floor for the potential of mercury. The soil and water are fine and there is no mercury in the concrete. We want to have accurate information for the preparation of the RFP. He mentioned what happened in West Haven with their project which is now facing multi million dollar remediation. Mr Morton will draft the RFP and will go out to bid at the beginning of April. We have a fair amount of interest from developers and even a couple of non profits considering a project for veterans, 55+ and a cash purchase. Mr. Smolnik asked if we are starting to assemble pro forma fiscal notes. Mr. Morton replied our market study did some pro forma targets and a probable range of bids for development. Mr. Good asked if community meetings have been held. Mr Morton replied over the past two years they have done one at the Ridge Hill School, one over Zoom, PTA meetings and have given High Meadows a web page and a Facebook page. Ms. Schomaker was at the Ridge Hill School in September of 2019 and there was a lot of hysteria over what would be in that location. He and Mr. Kroop explained the process and let the attendees air their concerns. People are much calmer now and know we heard their concerns. From where we started to where we are now, the public is much more amenable.

#### Introduction of new Commissioner Joshua L. Watkins

Mr. Sachetti introduced new Commissioner Joshua Watkins and said we now have a full slate. Mr. Watkins said he is the director of the Community Soup Kitchen in New Haven and has lived in Hamden for a year and a half, moving here from New York City where he served on many boards and commissions. He wants to do what he can to make Hamden a better place.

#### 4. Report of the Interim Director Curtis Eatman

Mr. Eatman addressed the commission and told how much he appreciated Ms. Schomaker being in his office and providing her expertise and an extra ear. He has a report on key economic indicators and projects and will submit it to the clerk for distribution. The Economic Development Office has a budget of \$245,000, and \$166,000 has been spent to date. \$157,000 goes to office salaries for one full time director, one part time staff and one vacant full time staff. The Hamden real estate market has been beaten down by Covid 19. Interest rates have been lowered.. Connecticut has seen an increase in housing demand and there are lots of people moving from New York City because of Covid. Hamden's grand list is definitely growing, with an approximate 8.25% increase. There has been a 10% increase in value in single family units and a 6% increase in condominium units. The average home is on the market for less than 34 days.

Mr. Eatman said the Town is intent on maintaining growth and will offer tax abatements to spur growth. The Department's website is HamdenEDC.com. We are exploring Opportunity Zones and other opportunities to spur growth. He has attended meetings with many local and regional groups and is looking for ways to improve our marketing strategy for the Town of Hamden. Responding to Mr. Sachetti's question, Mr. Eatman said he spends the morning doing cold calls and networking. From 1:00 to 5 or 6:00 p.m. he speaks with commissioners, stakeholders and developers interested in coming into Town. From 6-8:00 p.m., he answers calls from community members and directs them to the EDC website and to the Business Assistance Center.

Mr. Smolnik asked about the assessor's numbers. Mr. Eatman explained that the revaluation has been performed and now the Board of Assessment appeals will go through its process and the number might change. The Finance Director and Assessor are working on that.

#### 5. Subcommittee Report

Mr. Sachetti said Mr. Moses is leading a subcommittee to determine how the commission can be more effective. Mr. Smolnik and Mr. Good are part of the subcommittee. Mr. Moses reported there are not many changes from the last report. He sent an email to the committee on Friday and put a timeline on completion of the report. There are some staggering changes occurring in Town and they are working to identify and recommend future needs and benefits of the Town, what changes occurred over the last ten years and how do we make adjustments to those changes. How can our tax base be increased without overburdening residents. He will have the report at the next meeting.

Mr. Sachetti said last Tuesday, Mr. Smolnik, Mr. Moses, Mr. Eatman and he met with the Fiscal Stability Committee of the Town regarding the types of things that are obstacles, provided oversight on our Three Year Plan and presented obstacles as we see them. Lack of inventory, high mill rate, no sewers north of Todd Street, business inventory in southern Hamden. Mr. Smolnik presented data on demographics trends within the Town. Mr. Sachetti said it is a great thing to have this kind of visibility. Mr. Sachetti thanked the subcommittee for their time and input.

Mr. Sachetti said he and the Mayor have tried but have been unable to meet over the last couple of months. He was hoping for an update on the search for a full time director and understands there have been thirteen applicants from a variety of sources. He will continue to try to meet with the Mayor and hopes to connect before next month's meeting.

#### 6. Old Business

There was no old business.

#### 7. New Businesses

Mr. Sachetti announced a number of continuing education opportunities available to the commissioners. The Connecticut Economic Development Association is conducting a manufacturing forum on Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup> from 11:30 to 12:30 titled The Future of Manufacturing in Connecticut.

The Northeast Economic Development Association on Tuesday March 16<sup>th</sup> at noon is holding a round table with economic development colleagues throughout the East.

The Connecticut Business and Industry Association is holding a Connecticut Business Day forum from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> with Chamber representatives and Governor Lamont regarding opportunities and challenges the State has faced. Various Legislators will be in attendance.

The Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce is having an economic development committee meeting tomorrow, and he and Mr. DelGREGO will be participating. Also, Mr. Eatman has been networking through the 16 town region for an opportunity to be more visible within the marketplace.

Mr. Hughey asked how to market Hamden when our neighboring towns of Wallingford and North Haven have lower mill rates and in Wallingford, lower electric rates. Mr. Sachetti said you have to sell what is in it for them, such as our Three Year Plan offering tax incentives, Hamden's location and available sites. There are a lot of variables trying to win a business. Mr. Eatman said he recently spoke with someone he hopes to present to the Commission next month who was raised here. Our business incentives are not offered in other places. He and Ms. Schomaker are excited about this possibility.

Ms. Schomaker said her work on behalf of Hamden in the statewide sustainability project is an economic advantage and she is bringing Hamden into a leadership role with the electric vehicle initiative to have a state of the art evolving plan. Tesla installed hardware in the Hamden Plaza. She has been involved and would like to have a big event in May and the Commission can help in planning that event. This has to be about celebrating Hamden. We can capitalize on this if we can attract people who would like to have electric vehicles. People will be able to charge their vehicles and shop or eat in our restaurants. We want Hamden to be front and center with energy efficiency programs and can beat out some of our surrounding towns on this. Ecology, economy and equity – this is a multi faceted effort.

Mr. Smolnik mentioned the American Rescue Plan which is close to passage. There is a lot of money aimed aimed at businesses. The numbers are Hamden \$11.9 million, New Haven County \$166 million and Connecticut \$4.23 billion. Some of the County and State funds will be shared by Hamden. Mr. Sachetti mentioned a conference call with the Mayors and Rosa DeLauro. Mr. DelGrego said he didn't see Hamden on the front page of the New Haven Register's stimulus article. Mr. Smolnik said the numbers are interesting and the final numbers will be different but there should be significant dollars flooding in.

8. Adjournment

**There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Sachetti asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Moses so moved. Mr. DelGrego seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.**

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk