



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

Curtis Eatman
Director

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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, May 11, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

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

Commissioners Excused: Ms. Sacco, Mr. Rolnick

Commissioners Absent: Mr. Watkins

Others in Attendance: REX Development Representatives Ms. Kozlowski (director) , Ms. Malmberg (Program Manager), Town Planner Mr. Johnson, Economic Development Director Mr. Eatman, Energy Efficiency Coordinator Ms. Schomaker, SCSU Student Ms. Campbell, Commission Clerk Ms. Tobin

1. Mr. Sachetti called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Review Minutes of April 13, 2021

Mr. Diaz made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2021 meeting. Mr. DelGregio seconded the motion. The vote was seven in favor with one abstention. The minutes were approved.

Mr. Sachetti called on Ms. Schomaker to update the Commission on Electric Vehicle (EV) matters. Ms. Schomaker said the Town's EV matters are proceeding at pace. Live Green CT, who manages the software training and education programming, was contacted by Greenspot, who wanted to do something in Connecticut. Hamden was selected and their siting team met with Hamden's GIS Coordinator to identify all municipal properties in town. A list was made. They then met with United Illuminating to determine which parcels have electrical connections. The Purchasing Department is preparing an RFP to send out. Greenspot will respond, so that part of our work is moving forward. The project developer had a phone call with Live Green identifying all of the Town's fleets. The fleet management team will let us know when each vehicle will be a candidate to convert to electric. There will be some planning and building regulations to be developed.

When the big federal infrastructure program gets passed, and when Volkswagen releases the settlement funds, we will be shovel ready. Ms. Schomaker will have more information at the June meeting.

Mr. DelGregio asked how long do batteries last and how are they disposed of. Ms. Schomaker will see what information she can find by the next meeting of the Commission regarding battery life and disposal.

Regarding the charging stations, some sites are Tesla only, but Tesla drivers can plug in to any charger using a converter. There is still no universal plug available.

Mr. Sachetti thanked Ms. Schomaker for her presentation and looks forward to further updates at the June meeting.

Mr. Sachetti said the Mayor put him in touch with Eric Johnson, the Town's new Town Planner, to talk about the proposed partnership between Planning & Zoning and Economic Development. Mr. Johnson will be both the director of Planning and Economic Development. This Commission will probably be working with him. Mr. Diaz asked if this Commission has any say in this decision. Mr. Eatman responded that Commissioners can speak to the Legislative Council, and can forward a letter to the Mayor and the Legislative Council, either as individuals or as a body. Mr. Moses asked Mr. Eatman what is the timeline for making recommendations. Mr. Eatman said this proposal is subject to a budget amendment. The Economic Development Department budget will be discussed by the Council on Wednesday. Mr. DelGregio said he doesn't see how one person can do two jobs. Mr. Eatman said there is a development and small business manager proposed to provide support for Director Johnson. This proposal saves the Town about \$34,000.

Mr. Sachetti introduced speakers Ms. Kozlowski and Ms. Malmberg of REX Development, who will update the Commission on the 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). Director Ms. Kozlowski introduced Program Manager Ms. Malmberg, who updated the Commission.

Ms. Malmberg said they can use the Commissioners's input and they can email either of them. They would like to have Hamden's input going forward.

Ms. Malmberg said the hospitality and leisure industries are not going to recover without continued vaccinations. The Pfizer vaccine has received emergency approval for kids 12-17. Phase II of the Payroll Protection Fund closed last week. Businesses eligible should still apply. Any errors in the application will cause the business to go to the bottom of the list, so applications must be prepared very carefully.

Pandemic or not, we have some issues with poverty in Connecticut. Four towns' levels increased by 25% or more. Meriden actually had a decrease in their poverty level. Information is available on available programs. For PPP round one, our region received \$1.3 billion in direct assistance. Contrary to the last time they were here in February of 2020, REX's focus has changed. Last year it was opportunity zones, and now it is seven areas. Ms. Malmberg mentioned that technology economic development is the way to go.

Ms. Malmberg said there is a new representative at USEDPA, and she is asking if you had six months notice regarding the pandemic, what would you have done to prepare. We need an analysis of strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in our region. They have come to the realization that REX has great communications with economic development, but not others at state and municipal levels.

Median sales prices of homes have increased. It is more difficult for people to enter the housing market. The price of rentals have also increased. The State of Connecticut is asking municipalities to submit a plan for affordable housing by July of 2022. A state and regional housing plan will be developed and we must provide more housing options.

Resilience – how do we recover from situations like contaminated water, damaged power grid, supply chain disruptions, network hacking, climate change. We have to work with state and federal agencies. Mr. Eatman commented on the cost of living in Connecticut. Ms. Malmberg said there has been no broad discussion at the State level on cutting taxes. The rainy day fund was used to supplement the State's pension fund. Ms. Kozlowski mentioned funds coming from the infrastructure bill. The slide on the State's recovery plan mentioned financial stability and tax certainty. We need to push our leaders to do better and be better.

Mr. Moses asked about opportunity zones. Ms. Malmberg replied that in terms of economic development, opportunity zone tax benefits are still available. Good projects will go through. The best projects should be presented to EDA.

Mr. Good asked about the increase in poverty in towns, but what is driving the decrease in poverty in Meriden. Ms. Malmberg mentioned that Meriden has redeveloped their downtown over the past five years and removed some old buildings. REX is waiting for the 2020 census numbers for more information. High speed fiber optic lines will attract tech companies. That is a high priority for the Governor for the Greater New Haven Area, which is the driver of economic development in our State.

Mr. Moses said conspicuously missing from the list of priorities is multi family and affordable housing for the workforce. Ms. Malmberg said the list was provided as an outline by the State. They are trying to teach municipalities that if you think about what you really want, developers shouldn't have to sue to get what they need. Aging in place is a priority. The Governor's priority is to support housing.

Ms. Malmberg sent Mr. Eatman her presentation. The final report will be shared with everyone. It will take all of us to rebuild. Hamden is in a really good spot.

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

Town Planner Eric Johnson was introduced and Mr. Sachetti advised him of earlier questions/comments by Mr. Diaz and Mr. DelGREGO expressing concern about the proposed merger of the Planning and Economic Development Offices. Mr. Johnson responded that it is his understanding that the Mayor has been thinking about this merger for a while. He believes it makes sense to consolidate at this time, and align the Economic Development and Planning roles to make sure thoughtful development of the Town can go forward. Often things people want to do but can't because of zoning and other obstacles. Mr. Johnson grew up in New Haven, went to Notre Dame High School, Trinity College and Morgan State University in Baltimore. Being from the area gives him the right perspective. Some of the logistics are still in front of the Legislative Council. Mr. DelGREGO said we are Commissioners to Economic Development. Will the two Commissions remain separate. Mr. Johnson replied they will. The State Statutes provide that the Planning and Zoning Commissions issue permits, etc. Perhaps we could have occasional joint meetings of the commissions to make sure their goals are aligned. Mr. DelGREGO said we were very happy to get Mr. Eatman. Mr. Johnson said the Mayor has been considering a multi-department head for a while. Mr. Eatman is leaving Town employment for other opportunities. Mr. Moses said he imagines that he had been privy to this plan for a couple of weeks. What is the expected timeline on presenting a plan on how the Town can proceed with its economic growth. Mr. Johnson said probably a month. Mr. Johnson said some of those discussions took place on Saturday during the budget hearing. Discussions have not been completed, such as a staffing plan, etc.

Mr. Johnson said he has been on board for two weeks. He hopes to get a report to the Economic Development Commission within thirty days or by next month's meeting. Mr. Johnson said the emphasis will be on staffing infrastructure going forward with the strategic plan of the Town and he hopes to facilitate more development quickly. Mr. Sachetti asked if Mr. Johnson has had an opportunity to look at the Three Year Plan which expires at the end of December 2021. There was further discussion on the Three Year Plan.

3. Report of the Director Curtis Eatman

Mr. Eatman announced that he has officially resigned and his official last day as Director of Economic Development is May 21, 2021. He thanked Commissioners for their calls, texts and well wishes. On Saturday, Mayor Leng amended his budget for the Economic Development Department naming Mr. Johnson Director and adding a new director of development and small business manager. The budget submitted for Economic Development was originally \$709,084, and that budget request has been reduced to \$675,084.

Regarding the tax incentive for the project at 1717 Dixwell Avenue/414 Mather Street, the project was approved by the Legislative Council with certain qualifications. Some things still need to be discussed. Mr. Johnson will be responsible for receiving monthly reports from the developer to this board. The Commission is aware that the Town is working on opportunity zones. Reports will be sent to the clerk. The Town was approached by Michael O'Meara of U. S. Capital Markets and will meet with Colony Partners later this week. Director Johnson is now the point of contact between the Town and the developer. The budget contains \$68,000 to market Hamden. This will be discussed by the Legislative Council on Wednesday. He would suggest that the department keep that amount for marketing strategy.

Mr. Eatman reported that the Mazda Dealership at 200 Skiff Street has been sold. The owner wants to sit down next month to see how the business can get more involved with the community. The owner has also contacted the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Sachetti said the work by GIS Coordinator Andrew Kinlock and Assessor's Office representative Nancy Forvil will have a followup presentation at next month's meeting. Opportunity Zones will be in demand because President Biden wants to increase the capital gains tax and investors will want to shelter some of their money.

Mr. Moses said it is good to see the Mather Street project moving forward without interruption. Mr. Eatman said they are implementing guidelines and rules and the contract will be signed next week. Reporting will be up to Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Moses said reporting should begin thirty days after construction starts. Mr. Eatman said it will be incumbent upon the director to decide how he will present the reports. Mr. Good recalls in the proposal for the development on Mather Street, there was 10,000 square feet on the first floor for commercial use, divided into four sections. He asked if there is any flexibility in the division in case a large entity wants the space. There will not be the number of parking spaces for a large business like a grocery store, but the developer will be willing to listen to proposals.

4. Project Updates, Grand Openings, etc.

5. Old Businesses

6. New Businesses

Mr. Moses asked if the Chamber might have a permanent seat for a commissioner on their Strategic Economic Development Initiative Committee. He feels Ken Good might be a good candidate for that seat. Mr. Sachetti thanked Mr. Moses for his input. He said when he served on the Chamber he served as a representative of his employer, as did Mr. Diaz when he served as Chamber President. Mr. Good thanked Mr. Moses for his confidence and has no objection at this point.

Mr. Sachetti said former Economic Development and Neighborhood Revitalization Director Dale Kroop will be at the next meeting of the Commission to report on the sale of the Hamden Business

Incubator to the Connecticut Center for the Arts and Technology of New Haven. There is a press release forthcoming and there is information on the Business Incubator web site.

7. Adjournment

There being no additional business to discuss, Mr. Sachetti asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Moses so moved. Mr. Diaz seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk

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