

Minutes: The Economic Development Commission, Town of Hamden, held a Regular Meeting via Zoom on Tuesday September 8, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center. The following topics were discussed:

**Zoom – <https://zoom.us/j/95991413462>,
Meeting ID 959 9141 3462, One TAP MOBIL: 1 646 558-8656**

Commissioners in Attendance: Mr. Sachetti, Mr. DelGrego, Mr. Good, Mr. Smolinski, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Rolnick, Ms. Sacco, Mr. DeNicola
Commissioners Absent: Mr. Moses

1. Call to Order

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

2. Review Minutes of August 11, 2020

Page 2, second to last line of first paragraph, change months to years

Mr. Good made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2020 meeting as corrected. Ms. Sacco seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

3. Report of the Director
Old Businesses

Mr. Kroop reported that he has been working with the Chamber on the Back to Business program, cluster by cluster. The first cluster, health care, has a working subcommittee under the leadership of Mike Ambrose of the Whitney Center. He has held a Zoom meeting with very small businesses, such as Moonrocks, an ice cream place and others who have their own unique needs and want help from the Town. They will be moving on to manufacturing and other areas. The most difficult part is getting the participants to do the work, rather than Mr. Kroop doing the work.

Mr. Kroop mentioned that he is finally getting the survey out. The Town had to upgrade their Survey Monkey account, and he has a good contact list. He will probably do more surveys as time goes on. Nancy from the Chamber is working hard.

Regarding the Economic and Neighborhood Development Department's web page, they are working on the next level of design, drop down menus and a cleanup of the main page. Mr. DelGrego had some concerns that will be fixed. They will create the capacity for YouTube videos. Mr. Kroop will circulate the progress at the next level.

Richard Pearce has been seeing a lot of people, both on line and in person. He is also doing a seminar for the Chamber. Mr. Diaz asked what type of businesses have Mr. Pearce's clients been thinking about. Mr. Kroop replied the whole gammit, non-profits, insurance, etc. People seem to be thinking that this might be a good time to start a business. Mr. Good asked about the seminar series for the Chamber. Mr. Kroop replied that it will be a three part series. Mr. DelGrego commented that he attended another of Mr. Pearce's series and it went really well.

Mr. Kroop said at the last meeting we approved two tax incentive applications. Steve decided to put his clothing store on hold. His other two stores are doing just okay. The old Stereo Station site will be paved in another week or so.

New Businesses

Mr. Reagan, who used to work in Mr. Kroop's office, has become a grandmother for the first time. Mr. Kroop mentioned that there was silence when he first said he was leaving. He said he really is going to leave, but will do work with the Corporation. He gave the Mayor a couple of ideas to fill his position until the end of the fiscal year. He is putting it all in writing. Dan Kops is retiring in January. We have a very able assistant town planner. He suggested the Mayor hire a hybrid position and two junior people like Manchester and Bloomfield did. We are down two Commissioners. Whatever the Commission wants to do should go to the Mayor in writing. Commissioners need to let the Mayor know what they want to see, such as being part of the recruiting process etc. He said we should be thinking toward 2030 about future development in Hamden. Mr. Kroop reported that the Commission's three year plan expires at the end of 2021. Mr. Sachetti said he will solicit input from the Commissioners and put together a letter to the Mayor. Mr. Rolnick suggested, if Commissioners agree, he would like a study on what the Town has to do to grow its grand list, a coherent plan. Mr. Sachetti said no one can deny that the residents are bearing the burden. Mr. Diaz asked about a time frame. There would need to be an RFP. Mr. Kroop said they completed the POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development this year) but this would be a different document. How do we get from 7.8% commercial. He said we should have an RFP by October 1st, have the proposals by the holidays, and start the first of the year. Nancy Forvil is back working and he wants to get a report on the Department's dollars. We have a decent amount in our marketing budget.

Mr. DeNicola asked what do we do with the information. Spring Glen and Westwoods do not want the commercial traffic. Mr. Kroop said that is an important part of the ground work. Residents of the various neighborhoods are very vocal. We would need to take this into account when creating proposals.

Mr. Kroop said he talks about broadband and sewers in northern Hamden. A new person might be able to sell these ideas. We need to do a lot of things for wealth building. This is the perfect time. Rich DePodesta's theory was always we need to create revenues. We need a new voice and energy and the support of leadership.

Mr. Rolnick said it has to be in black and white not different people with different interests throwing things out.

Mr. Smolnik said he gets contacted by CECD . We should explore their resources. They have answers, equipment and boots on the ground. Mr. Kroop said that is a good idea. Another good contact is Advance CT. Mr. Rolnick said he used to work in government. We have to be careful how far ahead we get of the Mayor and the Legislative Council. We need a manager of Economic Development. Bringing in an outside group gives it validity.

Mr. Good asked how much would a consultant cost. Mr. Kroop replied \$25,000 or more. We need a job description for a new director. Mr. DeNicola said he understands the value of the study. Spring Glen wants nothing to happen in Spring Glen.

Ms. Sacco mentioned convincing might be done through negotiation. We could have three plans, a large, medium and small, hoping to get the medium plan approved.

Mr. Sachetti said he sees studies done in financial services. If you don't have someone at the top to champion the process it goes nowhere. Mr. Kroop said the options need to include a budget. Mr. Diaz asked who will put the language together. Mr. Kroop said the minutes will be helpful. He and Mr. Sachetti can do a draft and send it around to Commissioners. If anyone has any input, please feel free to forward it.

Mr. Smolnik asked if should make informal contact with CECD . Mr. Rolnick said he wouldn't do it. We must get the Mayor on board. He said once the letter is done, perhaps we could have a subcommittee of the Commission talk to the Mayor after he receives the letter.

6. Project Updates: Redevelopment, Openings, Etc.

Mr. Kroop said he had contact with the Mayor when he was away. He heard that Bob's was closing, and went there on Saturday. They had closing signs in the windows. He called Kimco who told him Bob's lease goes to 2023. There had been talk of Walmart wanting to expand. Mr. Kroop said he won't be surprised to see others in our retail space closing.

- Mr. Kroop said a Cajun seafood restaurant (Crab DuJour) is opening in the Hamden Mart where the liquor store was. The remainder of the space will be taken by a dentist.
- At Putnam Place, Porter and Chester is back in business.
- He spoke to the owner of the Plaza, who has a boatload of tenants coming on board.
- Chase Bank is moving into the old People's Bank.
- Redevelopment of High Meadows School – the planning consultant is doing a market study. Mr. Kroop is handing the project over to Walter Morton in the Mayor's Office. This is the conversion of an old school into something that has tax revenue.
- The hotel is creeping along
- He has heard nothing on the Hop Knot site
- In response to Mr. Good, Mr. Kroop has heard nothing about the Roost site.

Mr. Diaz asked about the low income housing on Westwoods Road. Mr. Kroop said this project has some market rate and some affordable housing. Mr. Kroop sent our information for Canal Commons and the low income housing across the street from it. The mailing created many calls. Mr. Kroop said most apartments being built are efficiencies and one bedrooms.

Hamden's school population is down. We need 65-70,000 people to make Hamden work.

Ms. Sacco asked if the Commission can meet without Mr. Kroop being there. Mr. Kroop said he will be here for the November meeting. Mr. Sachetti said if Mr. Kroop's position is unfilled, perhaps we could have a representative from the Mayor's Office attend meetings. Mr. DeNicola asked where the information comes from that Mr. Kroop presents every month. Mr. Kroop said he keeps in touch with the Chamber and the shopping center people. Mr. Rolnick suggested Mr. Sachetti meet with the Mayor. Mr. Kroop said he has given the Mayor suggestions to stay in touch with developers and shopping center people.

Mr. Smolnik will send some data to Mr. Sachetti.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Sachetti asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Diaz so moved. Ms. Sacco seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk

Tel (203) 287-7033

Fax (203) 287-7035

e-mail: dkroop@hamden.com