



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

Dale Kroop, Director

MEETING ID: 946 3010 1242
ONE TAP MOBIL: 1 646-558-8656

Minutes: The Economic Development Commission held a Regular Meeting on November 10, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. The following topics were discussed:

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

Commissioners Absent: Mr. Diaz

Others in Attendance: Mr. Kroop, Ms. Schomaker, Ms. Tobin

1. Call to Order

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

2. Review Minutes of October 13, 2020

Ms. Sacco made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2020 meeting. Mr. Smolnik seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Sachetti told Commissioners that during the month of October he reached out to Mayor Leng, twice via email and once by phone, to express the willingness on behalf of the Commission to participate in the search for a replacement for the Economic Development Director position. He also wanted Mayor Leng to know that Mr. Moses and Mr. Smolnik volunteered for the search committee. He has had no feedback to date.

3. Report of the Director

Mr. Kroop addressed the Commission for his final time as Director. He noted that the web site is almost complete and he will send the beta version to Commissioners for review. It will be live before he retires. Mr. Good said it looks great, clean, well organized, and you can find things easily. He has tested it on all platforms and found it to be good on all. There are possibly a few typos that were copied and pasted from the old site. Commissioners should make a list of things that need to be changed. Mr. Sachetti expressed his thanks to Mr. DelGrego and Mr. Good for their efforts in making it look great. The available properties sections looks great. Mr. Sachetti asked if there will be analytics to show who is looking at it. Mr. Good said that is standard on every website. We have to get Google Analytics for running the old site. Mr. Kroop mentioned that we had 600 views from Russia last year, probably mostly by bots. There were views from several other countries as well. The website probably will be hamdenedc.com. Mr. Sachetti asked once Mr. Kroop leaves, who do we talk to. Mr. Sachetti will have the contact at Web Solutions. Mr. Sachetti asked if there is a content management system. Mr. Kroop

replied yes and there are training opportunities. Mr. Sachetti asked who will be the administrator. Mr. Kroop replied that is to be assigned. Mr. Good will take the training and be able to update as needed. Mr. Moses said Mr. Sachetti and Mr. Good should communicate on a consistent basis.

Mr. Kroop reported that there is approximately \$100,000-\$105,000 left in the three year plan that can be used for incentives and marketing. . If the Commission wants to do a study, the funding should come out of marketing. All other accounts have been zeroed out. The Business Assistance Center will be just about out of funds at year's end. The Town Hall has been closed to the public. Mr. Pearce has been seeing people at the in incubator or on zoom. The 3 year plan expires in 2021.

Mr. Kroop mentioned that the day care survey was sent out a second time. He will be able to report on the results before he retires.

Mr. Kroop mentioned several complicated projects he worked on, including the Eli Whitney Museum, Home Depot (eminent domain); Highwood Square; State Street municipal Development Plan; DOT Bus Garage at Detroit Steel.

Memories:

Mr. Sachetti has been on the Commission for many years, replacing Commercial Realtor® Kevin Smith. Thanks to Mayor Barbara DeNicola who took Economic Development seriously and raised \$1.4 million dollars from the sale of the Hamden Industrial Park and set the funds aside, becoming the funding for what we've been working on. We had incentives and loans. Brownfield development came about in 2006. Mr. Kroop mentioned Mary Jean Vining and Dolores Giannini, former Commissioners. He mentioned that Ms. Giannini and Peter Torello were passionate about the Highwood Commercial District and streetscape. After Ms. Giannini died, and in spite of their many clashes, Mr. Kroop was asked to do her eulogy. She was also an advocate of the Hamden Chamber of Commerce. Former Commissioner Rich DePodesta is still doing a little real estate after selling his business. Ozzie Brown was one of the founding members if the Hamden Economic Development Corporation. Richard Pearce was on the Commission when Mr. Kroop first started as was Matt Sussman. All current and former Commission members deserve credit.

Sometimes his job was complicated, according to Mr. Kroop. He mentioned the following developments he worked on: Eli Whitney Museum, Home Depot (eminent domain); Highwood Square; State Street municipal development plan; DOT Bus garage at Detroit Steel ; The Daddio Farm; Walgreen's on Whitney Avenue near the post office. He recalls the light pole 2' in the wrong direction and had to be moved. The property owner refused to allow the pole on his property. Jack Kennelly solved that problem and got the owner to cooperate. He remembered the old man who would not sell his equipment in Highwood Square. The CDBG Block Grant is now being handled by Adam Sendroff at the Keefe Center. Mr. Kroop said his job has been diverse, rewarding, with great people to work with. Mr. Kroop is in the process of writing a book on his time in Economic Development. Mr. Good said Mr. Kroop skipped about how much fun he had at Daniel's!

Mr. Sachetti asked for a motion to thank Mr. Kroop for his dedication and hard work, his ability to find common ground, his leadership and his years of faithful service to the Town of Hamden. Mr. DelGrego so moved. Mr. Rolnick seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Moses mentioned his involvement with CEDES. Mr. Kroop said all Commissioners are members and he will send the list of Commissioners with the renewal. Mr. Kroop said this is an excellent organization of which he used to be president. This is a statewide trade organization and is of a lot of value for the \$150 for all Commissioners to be members. He will send out the information. Mr. Moses said it prevents us from having to reinvent the wheel and a good source of information. Members can attend events at a discount.

Ms. Tobin asked about Ms. Forvil. Mr. Kroop responded that she is working in Economic Development for about eight hours a week, and has been working in the Assessor's Office. The administration will figure out what to do after his last day on November 30th.

Mr. Kroop mentioned that he belongs to other organizations including ICSC, the largest group of shopping center owners. He will share the password to the website. In addition, the New Haven Manufacturing Association and a couple of others. Mr. DeNicola asked from November 30th until his replacement is found, who is going to provide us with the information Mr. Kroop used to provide that we could use to keep up to date. Mr. Kroop said IT gives him access to his email until he is replaced. Ms. Forvil can work on different expiration dates and will share with the Hamden Chamber. Mr. Kroop has been archiving, cataloging and cleaning out paperwork. He said he is 80% done.

Mr. Kroop started working for the Town in the summer of 1999. Prior to that Mr. Sachetti and Mr. Rolnick worked with Peggy Brennan. He started part time, 30 hours a week. He remembers a council meeting when all seven Republican members walked out. Mayor Amento won the election over Barbara DeNicola that year, and Mr. Kroop stayed on full time. Some mayors were not friends of Economic Development.

Mr. Kroop is using an IT generated Zoom account. Ms. Tobin or Ms. Schomaker can be administrator. Mr. Kroop suggested the Commission try to get speakers for their meetings including from the previously mentioned organizations and local chapters.

Ms. Schomaker would appreciate an opportunity to share more with this Commission on what we are doing to electrify transportation and explain the great importance. Mr. Moses said that is a good idea and it would be very helpful if she would come up with a synopsis and allow Commissioners to educate themselves. Ms. Schomaker said she is partnering with several groups on this project. There is a 12 week tool kit running statewide getting ready to start a year long program being set up professionally in the State of Connecticut so we will be positioned to get the funding coming down the highway. She will send an introductory email with a list of topics. Mr. Ms. Sachetti will do everything in his power to keep Commissioners posted. Ms. Schomaker said the Council leadership has plans for the Economic Development Department and she will work that angle. She also did not get a response from Mayor Leng.

4. Old Business

5. New Businesses.

Review and approval of 2021 meeting schedule

Meetings continue to be schedule for the second Tuesday of each month.

Mr. Rolnick made a motion to approve the 2021 Economic Development Commission meeting schedule. Ms. Sacco seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

6. Project Updates: Redevelopment, Openings, Etc.

Mr. Kroop said there is not a large amount of activity. The hotel has stopped construction due to financial issues. The Crab restaurant is moving to the Hamden Mart in February. There are a lot of plans for the Hamden Plaza, including a pod site in the spring of 2021. Shopping Centers are still over 90% occupied with triple net leases, which means that they pay the property taxes.

Mr. Kroop mentioned there is some redevelopment going on near Edmund Street. A developer purchased property and will cut it up into more housing proposals. There is a proposal for a mixed use commercial project behind Advanced Auto. Going forward, a new person has to look at what Hamden would look in 2030. Sewers on norther Whitney Avenue have to be on the table.

Mr. Sachetti asked if there were any questions. Mr. Good asked about the High Meadows project and how does Mr. Kroop feel about Enterprise Zones and Broadband. Mr. Kroop said the engineering study has been completed, and there is not much change regarding wetlands. There is an environmental study of the buildings, and a market study for potential use. That would pretty much be senior housing and health car. This would be a low impact use in the neighborhood and bring in about \$50,000 in tax revenue. Ms. Schomaker represents that district and met today with with a first draft. There will be a community meeting with the professionals this Thursday at 6:00 p.m. to inform and show what studies found. They will meet again next Tuesday to discuss the public comment. The Fiscal Stability Committee has to go to Council and Ms Schomaker is not up to speed on that.

Regarding Enterprise and Opportunity Zones, not that many projects are eligible The Enterprise Zone is used occasionally. St. Ann's Church sold but the property is not eligible. Maybe the Opportunity Zone could be. There is a big developer looking at an Opportunity Zone in Highwood for investment which the new person will have to look at. We need to break the digital divide and make the investment to make the economy work. Broadband is an immediate thing for people to think about. 2030 will be impacted by this issue. Covid illuminates this as a critical issue. Ms. Sacco said now that the students have gone home, she noticed a big difference in distance learning as not everyone's service is as good as what is available at Quinnipiac. Distance Learning is a real pressing issue.

Mr. Sachetti thanked Mr. Kroop for his long term service and insight and information. He said the Commission is u p to the challenge as a Commission.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Sachetti asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeNicola so moved. Mr. DelGrego seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk