

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
LINCOLN CENTER – DIRECTORS ROOM
MINUTES
JUNE 13, 2019**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jack Sayre, Chair; Joy Dorin, Tom Phillips, Steve Carter, Norm DeLaura, and Tom Deffenbaugh

ALSO PRESENT: Tana Parseliti, Downtown Development Specialist;
Gary Anderson, Director of Planning and Economic Development;
Kyle Shiel, Senior Planner

Minutes for Approval – March 14, 2019

Ms. Dorin made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Carter seconded and all voted in favor.

Discussion: Advancing Economic Development Policies

Mr. Carter said based on Board of Director's (BOD) reluctance to adopt a formal discussion on tax assessment, he believed the Economic Development Commission (EDC) members could potentially take on a greater role in advocating for various economic development policies. Ms. Dorin asked how the EDC might specifically take on more of an advocacy role. Mr. Anderson said much of the work could take the form of preliminary meetings and conversations with BOD members to better inform them of the potential benefits of various policies and the level of support behind them. Mr. Carter said he believed such groundwork can be helpful with Board members.

Mr. Anderson said after elections, the General Manager often organizes policy briefings to discuss issues of importance for the Town. He said there may be an opportunity later this year for such a meeting and the EDC play a role. Mr. Carter said the EDC could either play an advisory-style role as a sounding board for various initiatives or try a more proactive advocacy approach. He said a question to consider going forward is which type of the role EDC members would favor. Mr. Anderson said the official charge of the EDC is advocacy, which could entail different roles, even potentially acting as a liaison for BOD members at times.

Mr. Phillips asked if economic development is a priority for the Board. Mr. DeLaura said in his opinion it did not appear to be among the Board's highest priorities recently. Mr. Anderson said individual Board members are generally supportive of specific projects as they arise, but the Board as a whole was currently focusing on other issues and has yet to approach economic development policies in a systematic fashion.

Mr. Carter said it is important to highlight the positive attributes about Connecticut and the Town as part of an economic development strategy. Mr. DeLaura said while the state has many ongoing challenges, Manchester in particular has many positive accomplishments worth touting.

Mr. Carter said more formal policies would provide certainty to prospective investors and businesses, particularly regarding tax assessment agreements. Mr. Anderson noted many communities in Connecticut have cited various tax incentives policies as a major contributor to the overall growth of their grand lists.

Mr. Phillips asked if there were particular activities from the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) study the EDC could focus on. Mr. Anderson said an initial follow-up survey about the study recommendations to focus group participants did not yield any responses, so implementation likely comes back to the EDC. He said this would likely be a topic of discussion for a future policy briefing/economic summit.

Update – Broad Street Parkade

Mr. Anderson said the Redevelopment Agency is considering a development proposal for the Broad Street redevelopment project, but would not be able to offer many details as discussion are still currently in executive session. He said the Agency is focused on one development team in particular whose proposal fits within the vision of the Broad Street Redevelopment Plan. He said the difference between the current proposal and previous relationships the Town has had from developers is the level of detail for proposed development plan and preliminary financing commitments in place. He said the Agency is cautiously optimistic and will be able to reveal more over the next month or so.

Update – Downtown Loan Program

Mr. Anderson said he has received inquiries about the loan program but no official application to date. He said he has been speaking with a business owner interested in specific downtown property and hopes to receive a formal application soon. He said the former Catsup & Mustard building is drawing interest from prospective buyers, although the upstairs floors are an issue and will likely require substantial renovations. He said the property lacks a space for a dumpster on property, so the Town is attempting to find a solution. He said one approach may be to lease a public parking space for dumpster. The EDC could play role advocating for this solution.

The renovation of the former East/West bridal store to Barry Law Offices is moving forward, although the project does not likely meet the “transformative” criteria for the downtown loan program. Mr. Anderson said the development of the Urban Lodge brewery continues, although that is purely private investment. He said the owners have contract with an artist to paint a mural on the back of the building and encouraged members to view it when in the area.

Report of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

There was no report from the Chamber of Commerce.

Report of the Special Services District

Ms. Parseliti said the Downtown Special Services District has a new Downtown Manager and she has been training her for the past three weeks. Danuta Wolk-Laniewski, owner of Yoga Perk, will be in this position on a part-time, 30-hours per week basis. Ms. Parseliti is taking a new position as Downtown Development Specialist and under the Planning and Economic

Development department. Her office is at Work_Space which allows her to remain connected to downtown and is excited for her new role.

Report of the Planning and Economic Development Director

Mr. Anderson said there continues to be a lot of development activity, including BJ's Restaurant in the Buckland Hills area, Urban Lodge brewery downtown, and Raymour & Flannigan's 200,000 square foot warehouse on Chapel Road. The Spencer's Landing development on Spencer Street broke ground and will feature 130 market-rate apartments for seniors. The former Hanshaw furniture property on East Middle Turnpike has approvals for 20 units of senior housing, while the Planning and Zoning Commission will be considering a 34 unit development behind the State social services building in the same neighborhood. Mr. Sayre asked about the status of Adams Mill and Mr. Anderson said it was sold to Eli's Restaurant Group of New Haven. The new restaurant will likely not feature much food, but will be focused on beer.

Other Business

Mr. DeLaura said a recent court case in Michigan banned the chalking of tires for parking enforcement and asked if there was an opportunity to be proactive in response, and to change the parking model downtown. Mr. Anderson said he is supportive of changing the model, but such a change would require consensus from multiple stakeholders. Ms. Parseliti said the cost of switching to a new model has been considered in the past but the cost of such a system was prohibitive for the SSD. Mr. Anderson agreed that it may be an opportune time to begin the discussion on downtown's parking model with stakeholders and encouraged Mr. DeLaura to consider taking part in such discussions.

In response to the Advancing Economic Development Policies agenda item, Mr. Phillips noted that attendance will be critical for continuing group momentum for the EDC. Other members agreed.

Adjournment

Mr. Deffenbaugh made a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeLaura seconded and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 am.