

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
LINCOLN CENTER – DIRECTORS ROOM  
MINUTES  
AUGUST 8, 2019**

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Gary Anderson, Director of Planning and Economic Development; April DiFalco, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce; Tana Parseliti, Downtown Development Specialist; and Kyle Shiel, Senior Planner

Minutes for Approval – July 11, 2019

Mr. DeLaura made a motion to adopt the minutes as written. Mr. Carter seconded and all members voted in favor.

Discussion: Application for Downtown Loan Program – 1115 Main Street

Mr. Anderson said staff is still awaiting additional information from the applicant, but the application is continuing to move forward. He suggested the EDC complete the Downtown Loan Program evaluation form based on last month's discussion. Mr. Shiel distributed the form and reviewed the criteria with members, which included Transformative Nature, Improves Long-Term Property Viability, Results in Desirable New Uses and Overall Downtown value vs. Requested/Grant Amount. Mr. DeLaura said he believed the Transformative Nature of the 1115 Main Street application, meets the criteria because it would improve the overall environment downtown. Mr. Phillips said the applicant appears to have a good sense of their customer base, which would draw people from throughout the region. Members agreed through consensus that the application merits the maximum score for that criterion.

Mr. Anderson said the applicant's architect has been in contact with the Town building department and appears to be on a realistic pathway towards significantly improving the building. Mr. Carter said he believed improving the long-term viability of the older buildings downtown was the most significant benefit of the loan program. Members agreed the proposal would greatly benefit the building, with a consensus that the application merits a high score. The next criteria "Results in Desirable New Uses" members felt the proposed café and arts-related uses are desirable uses in downtown, and asked for more detail on the proposed upper story residential uses. The last criteria "Overall Downtown value vs. Requested/Grant Amount", the applicant scored somewhat lower based on the amount requested. Based on the criteria scores and associated weights the application scored 9.4 out of a possible 10.

Mr. Anderson said he will continue to work with the applicant and the Town finance department to get all additional documents in anticipation of the next EDC meeting. In response to a question from Mr. Sayre, Mr. Anderson said the Planning and Economic Development

Department and Building Department would track the progress of the project. In response to a suggestion by Mr. Phillips, Mr. Anderson said regular project status updates would be provided to the EDC.

### Discussion of Economic Development Priorities

Mr. Shiel said he received responses for the survey on economic development priorities for the EDC. Mr. Anderson said they were derived from the report completed by the Connecticut Economic Resource Center last year. Mr. Shiel reviewed the survey results, which included recommendations in categories including Marketing, Financing, Business Engagement, Land Use, and Community. One open-ended comment included a suggestion that the Downtown Special Services District extend further north towards Middle Turnpike. Mr. Carter said that was his suggestion, noting the idea has been discussed at various workshops and with business owners in the area and that it makes sense to consider that area of Main Street as a contiguous piece with downtown and Center Springs Park.

Mr. Anderson said marketing Opportunity Zones is one of the potentially more significant pieces mentioned in the recommendations, particularly as it relates to Broad Street. Mr. DeLaura said a recent Hartford Business Journal article highlighting Manchester's recent successes was positive publicity, which serves to promote economic development. Mr. Phillips said he hopes to see more focus on human capital development, citing his experience consulting for Middletown on the Federal Reserve's Working Cities Challenge. Mr. Carter agreed that workforce development and job training are areas of need for the region and mentioned he often has difficulty finding qualified workers for his business. Ms. DiFalco said Manchester High School often offers relevant vocational training for certain occupations. Mr. Anderson said workforce development is a critical issue but in his opinion, is most effectively addressed at a regional or state level.

Mr. Sayre suggested the future of the Buckland Malls area should be an item to monitor. Mr. Anderson agreed, noting the property is the largest single contributor to the grand list. Mr. Phillips said the mall area should be on the EDC's radar going forward and asked if there were best practices regarding adapting and modernizing malls. Mr. Anderson said there were and this item could be discussed at a future meeting.

### Report of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Ms. DiFalco said the Chamber is continuing to develop new programs such as sponsoring a quarterly women's empowerment workshop. One workshop focused on first aid treatment relating to gun violence, which is taught by retired police officers. The Chamber is sponsoring a First Responder Appreciation Day on September 13<sup>th</sup>. The Chamber has a new intern from MCC who assists with various duties and mentioned a need to update a comprehensive list of businesses in Manchester.

### Report of the Special Services District

Mr. Anderson said he is working with the Downtown Special Services District to determine their liaison to the EDC. In the meantime, he said he has been working on a variety of downtown initiatives with Ms. Parseliti and Ms. Koehler.

## Report of the Planning and Economic Development Director

Mr. Anderson said Urban Lodge Brewing is hosting a soft opening next week, with an official larger opening set later in the month. He said the Town continues to negotiate a development agreement for the Broad Street redevelopment project with the developer. Mr. Sayre asked about the timeframe for negotiations. Mr. Anderson said it would likely take at least two months to complete development agreement. Regarding the previous discussion about the Buckland Mall area, he said he is meeting with mall management to discuss their plans and outlook for the area. He said Buckland is considered a second tier mall– reasonably healthy, but still vulnerable to changing markets. He said the current market trend is to build outside on the ring road, as the exterior portion of mall is doing relatively well. He said the challenge is to revitalize the interior. Mr. DeLaura said national chains in Manchester are usually the last to close as the retail market is comparatively stronger here. Mr. Anderson said the future of the mall area is more upbeat than often presented in the press, but the area certainly does face challenges.

Mr. Anderson said he is working with Ms. Parseliti on a “Discovery map” for Downtown and core areas, which will highlight key businesses for a nominal fee. Mr. Sayre asked if the Town is working with the Chamber on the project. Mr. Anderson said it’s a slightly different, more focused project than the Chamber typically addresses. Ms. DiFalco agreed the project was a good start that could potentially be subsequently built upon.

### Other Business

There was no other business items discussed.

### Adjournment

Mr. DeLaura made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Carter seconded and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 am.