

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
LINCOLN CENTER – DIRECTORS ROOM
MINUTES
JANUARY 9, 2020**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Norm DeLaura, Co-Chair; Tom Phillips, Co-Chair; Steve Carter, Sean Lindsay, Joy Dorin, and Michelle Koehler

ALSO PRESENT: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning and Economic Development; Judith Schuberth, Senior Administrative Secretary

I. Adoption of the Minutes of December 12, 2019

Mr. DeLaura called the meeting to order and asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Carter moved to approve the minutes as written, Ms. Koehler seconded and all members voted in favor.

2. Draft 2020 Economic Development Report

Mr. Anderson said he will be presenting an economic development report to the Board of Directors at an upcoming Board meeting and that he hoped to get input from members of the EDC on the contents of the report. He shared a PowerPoint presentation and asked members for any comments or suggestions. He reviewed many economic trends and development including the estimated value of all construction in 2019, new business starts, Main Street businesses, the Downtown 2020 Initiative, new businesses and other economic changes throughout the Town.

Ms. Dorin asked if the amount paid for permits was only for commercial work. Mr. Anderson said that the amount shown includes commercial and residential projects and that there is not a way to separate the two categories. In response to a question from Mr. DeLaura, Mr. Anderson said he did not know the number of employees for each of the new businesses created but agreed that would be useful information to have.

Mr. Anderson updated members on the new Firestone Art Studio and Café. The Studio is now open and the Café should be open within a few weeks. In response to a question from Mr. Lindsay, Ms. Koehler said that in addition to their drop-in art hours, there are classes at the studio and in the future there will be pottery wheels as well. Ms. Dorin said that she visited with her grandchildren and it was very enjoyable and that they offer a monthly children's activity which will allow parents to go out to dinner while their children enjoy the studio's activity. In response to a question from Mr. Phillips Mr. Anderson said he would investigate the possibility of having a future EDC meet onsite at the Firestone.

Mr. Anderson discussed the positive economic impact the breweries in Manchester seem to be having and an upcoming brew tour that will visit the four breweries in Manchester. Mr. Anderson's presentation included photographs of Urban Lodge and the new Elicit brewery. Both breweries invested significant resources in their respective projects and have been very successful to this point. In response to a question from Ms. Dorin, Mr. Anderson said the new string lighting over Purnell Place is the

property of the Town and that some have expressed a desire to turn Purnell Place into a pedestrian only walkway during some times of the day and/or week.

Mr. Anderson said that the Manchester Mall on Main Street seems to be moving in a positive direction. New vendors have rented space within the building and more customers seem to be aware of the building's location and unique offerings.

In response to a request from Mr. Anderson, Ms. Koehler summarized and explained the services she provides to business owners and potential business owners as an advisor with the Connecticut Small Business Development Center. Those resources include financial and lending information, marketing suggestions, management solutions, etc. There are no costs for those services. She said many businesses that started with her return in a few years when they need help with expansion.

Mr. Anderson said the Winstanley Logistics Center new tenant is Ahold Delhaize, the parent company of Stop and Shop, and they will be consolidating much of its northeast distribution activity into 1 million sf of the 2 million sf building. The company has estimated that the operation will require approximately 500 – 700 new jobs once they are in full operation.

A wood pellet fabrication company is on track to open in the old Connecticut Farmers co-op building later this year. The Calamar Senior market rate apartments on Spencer Street appear to be on track after a few construction-related delays.

In response to a question from Mr. DeLaura, Mr. Anderson said he does not have data on the number of business startups that are still in business and the number of those that went under. Mr. DeLaura said that if they could be tracked not only if they are still in business but if they have expanded, by what size and other information would be interesting.

Mr. Philips said that the impact these business have had on the Town's grand list would also be a valuable marker of the success of the Town's efforts.

Mr. Anderson said the new position of communications manager has been filled. Brianna Smith will be responsible for all Town communication, which may include marketing and branding efforts in the future. Ms. Smith could be a resource for economic development going forward.

Ms. Koehler said that Manchester is known as a welcoming Town and Mr. DeLaura said the Town provides many tools for businesses. Mr. Philips said that a video with business testimonials would be a good way to market Manchester.

3. Report of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Anderson said the Chamber of Commerce was short staffed but recently hired a new staff person and hoped that meant that someone from the Chamber would be able to attend EDC meetings again.

4. Report of the Special Services District

Mr. Anderson said that Tana Parseliti is no longer the SSD Manager and that Don Dubaldo, SSD Commission Chairman is receiving the EDC packet of information. If there is a matter before the EDC that requires input from the SSD then Mr. Dubaldo or another commissioner would attend the meeting.

5. Report of the Planning and Economic Development Manager

Mr. Anderson distributed a flyer regarding an advisory board meeting for the development of skilled workers at the high school on January 21. The high school is planning to partner with Manchester Community College so that students can graduate from the high school with an associate degree in manufacturing. Mr. Anderson said he would be attending as well as Scott Shanley and some Board of Directors.

Mr. Anderson said that two part-time associates at Work_Space are leaving for full-time positions elsewhere. He said both Emma Petersen and Lori Dusza have been critical to WORK_SPACE's recent success and wished them well. He distributed a job description and asked members to post or pass on the information.

Mr. Anderson said that the Town held a tax sale on various properties and the former Gerich garage property on Tolland Turnpike sold for the full cost of back taxes in the amount of over \$300,000. The purchaser has to pay the full amount on Monday, January 13, he said.

Mr. Philips moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Carter seconded and all members voted in favor.