

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
VIRTUAL MEETING  
MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 10, 2020**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tom Phillips, Co-Chair; Norm DeLaura, Co-Chair, Shelly Koehler, Joy Dorin, Sean Lindsey

**ALSO PRESENT:** Gary Anderson, Director of Planning & Economic Development  
Kyle Shiel, Senior Planner  
April DiFalco, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Adoption of Minutes of August 13, 2020

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

COVID-19 related Business Resources & Economic Update

Ms. Koehler said she did not have significant updates regarding the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), but in general she has found restaurants and bars being the hardest hit. She said most of her clients are holding onto PPP funds they have received in the event there is a further economic downturn. She said there is a hope that most loans under \$150,000 will be forgiven without significant administrative hurdles.

Mr. DeLaura asked if she has heard anything from restaurant owners about the fall and winter season and how they anticipate it will impact their business. She said ventilation is a key aspect being discussed by many, which may make indoor dining continue to be difficult for the near future. She said consumer confidence about indoor dining currently not high enough to sustain the industry as a whole. She said salons and groceries stores have had success adapting, although salons are having difficulty scaling operations due to the limits on number of clients indoors at a time.

Mr. Phillips asked if Ms. Koehler has been referring clients to the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) for their series on education webinars on COVID-19 related resources. Mr. Koehler said she is familiar with the organization and that their programs are good. She said she generally refers clients to existing sources she commonly uses to minimize confusion due to the volume of information available.

Report of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Ms. DiFalco said the Chamber is trying to find more useful resources and help businesses navigate. She said Chambers of Commerce are not eligible for PPP loans, so they have been continuing to operate in a difficult environment. She said even during this difficult time, the

Chamber continues to gain new members including New England Bioassay, a beauty salon, CVS and a cybersecurity firm. She said in-person fundraising events have been largely not been viable, but the Chambers is looking at hybrid events for members.

She said the Chamber has partnered with the Town on a promotional marketing campaign call ed “Go! Explore Manchester”. She said the campaign is intended to be free advertising for local businesses. She said the campaign will be Town-wide and feature an identifying logo which will likely be adapted to future Chamber initiatives. She said the campaign involves a site visit to take photos of businesses to create content for promotion on various social media platforms. Mr. Shiel said Summit Studios and Labyrinth Brewing were examples of two local businesses he has visited to learn more about how they are adapting to social distancing guidelines.

Ms. DiFalco said the Chamber has their annual Golf Tournament recently. She said it was challenging due to public health guidelines, but went reasonably well. She said she anticipates the number of golfers and money spent during tournaments will likely decline a bit.

#### Report of the Downtown Special Services District (SSD)

Mr. Anderson said the district named a liaison- Joel Lipner, the owner of Framed Dimensions. He said Mr. Lipner will be at future meetings.

#### Report of the Planning and Economic Development Director

Mr. Anderson said the first recipient of the Downtown 2020 loan program, Firestone Art Studio & Café is doing reasonably well adapting to pandemic. He said they finished the first phase of renovations, but will likely ask the Commission to reconsider a slight restructuring of loan in the near future. Mr. Phillips asked if other businesses have expressed interest in the loan program. Mr. Anderson said a few have inquired about the program. He said the developer of the former Catsup & Mustard building may be interested, but he has not received a formal request from them.

He said the new owner of 1073 Main has ideas to transform the building and to expand the existing retail store and may apply for the SSD’s mini-grant for design work. He said he spoke with the CT Main Street center and is attempting to generate interest in the Peters Building. He said he has had discussions with the Board of Directors to possibly extend the loan program another 1-2 years, with some potential revisions to include other items such as improved ventilation.

Mr. DeLaura said he supports extending the loan program and that it makes sense to consider including COVID-19 related improvements. Mr. Phillips said there does not seem to be universal building standards for COVID-19 safety standards. Mr. Anderson said he could touch base with Building Department officials for possible standards to apply to the loan. He asked if there was consensus among the EDC for extending the loan program. All members replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Anderson said Ahold Delhaize is beginning plans to renovate space at Winstanley Logistics Center, with the remaining 365,000 square feet lined up for lease with a new tenant. He said the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) approved a zone change for a farm property on Bush

Hill Road. He said it was downzoned to Rural Residential, which is in line with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development to support farms where possible. He said the Manchester Country Club currently has bids out for restaurants to manage their tent space, which could potentially become a regional center for events. Ms. DiFalco asked about a new bank that recently coming to Manchester. Mr. Anderson that was Dime Bank, which will be taking over the former Farmington Bank branch on Middle Turnpike.

Mr. Lindsey asked for an update on the Broad Street redevelopment project. Mr. Anderson said the Board approved the development agreement and the Town was very close to signing the final deal. He said the tax assessment agreement is close to final as well. He said the PZC recommended the sale of the property. He said the Town is still waiting to receive the title for Green Manor Boulevard and must begin planning to make some repairs to the road as part of the development agreement.

### Other Business

Mr. Phillips said he and Mr. DeLaura met with staff back in March to discuss items the Commission could work on. He suggested that one potential future work item would be establishing a formal business outreach program to meet with businesses to hear feedback. He suggested occasional joint forums with Chamber could be another option. The second suggested item was developing a yearly work plan for the Commission, a basic outline of goals and objectives, with some ways to measure success or impact. He said meeting with other commission to see if there are areas of overlap could also be beneficial.

Ms. Dorin said the proposal make sense for the Commission. Norm said learning more about what other groups/commissions are working on would be helpful for the Commission. He said one item for next year's agenda could include post-COVID recovery plan, which could involve working with other groups to assist town recovery. Mr. Phillips said exploring any available funding through programs like the Community Reinvestment Act are worth considering. Ms. Dorin said she supported those ideas, and that having a targeted work plan and collaborating with other commissions is a worthwhile.

Mr. Anderson suggested a possible next step is setting up a joint meeting with other commissions. Ms. Dorin said the department had previously put together a document outlining various charges of commissions, which would be helpful to review again. Mr. DeLaura said the goal of the meeting should be to determine areas of overlap where commissions can work together. Mr. Anderson said he would reach out to chairs from Planning and Zoning, the Redevelopment Agency, the Downtown SSD and the chair from this Commission.

### Adjournment

Mr. Phillips made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Koehler seconded and all members voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:04 am.