

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
VIRTUAL MEETING
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 11, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Phillips, Co-Chair; Norm DeLaura, Co-Chair, Shelly Koehler, Tom Deffenbaugh, Sean Lindsay, Steve Carter, Earnell Kelly

ALSO PRESENT: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning & Economic Development
Kyle Shiel, Senior Planner
Joe Lipiner, Downtown Special Services District

Adoption of Minutes of January 14, 2020

Mr. Phillips moved to adopt the minutes as written. Ms. Koehler seconded and all members voted in favor.

Discussion of 2021 EDC Workplan

Mr. Phillips discussed a proposed 2021 work plan for the Commission. He said it would primarily be organized around post-COVID recovery efforts for businesses and identifying programs and resources where there may be gaps at federal and state levels. He said some sort of survey to gauge the most critical needs of the business community would be beneficial. Ms. Koehler agreed that some type of business survey would be a useful first step. Mr. Phillips said businesses may benefit from navigation assistance for unfamiliar programs. Mr. Anderson said the federal CARES act includes CDBG funds for qualified businesses, so there will be opportunities to connect potential applicants with resources. Regarding the survey, Mr. Phillips asked what the appropriate scale may be for gathering input. Mr. Shiel said it may be worthwhile to check with the Department of Economic and Community Development or the MetroHartford Alliance to see if they are already planning a similar survey. He said he would reach out to them to learn more. Mr. Anderson said the Town's Your Voice Matters platform would be another potential avenue. Mr. Phillips said the Town must be prepared to proactively follow-up on any survey.

Mr. Phillips also suggested meeting with businesses and identifying particular sectors to hear from directly to get their feedback. He said restaurants, hospitality, retail and manufacturing could be useful sectors to hear from. Mr. Lipiner said businesses may be more willing to provide candid feedback in such a forum. Mr. Anderson said WORK_SPACE was planning on holding a tech roundtable in the near future, which may be of interest to Commission members. Mr. Phillips suggested later in the year potentially gathering with other boards and commissions to explore potential areas of collaboration, particularly with the Board of Education and any entity leading workforce development efforts.

Mr. Phillips said the economic development section of the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) was another potential area to work on. Mr. Anderson said the POCD is

due for an update in the next year and the Commission may want to help begin the process in part by reviewing the economic development section and determining if any specific updates are required. He said staff could provide an excerpt prior to the next meeting if desired.

Lastly, Mr. Phillips said connecting local residents to employment opportunities such as the Winstanley Logistics Center should be an item to consider. Mr. Anderson said the Human Services department has been in contact with Winstanley and they are working on putting together a job fair to help local residents apply for upcoming job openings at the facility. He said the Center was likely to be a regional employer, but local residents should certainly be a major part of the workforce.

Report of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Postponed until next meeting.

Report of the Downtown Special Services District (SSD)

Mr. Lipiner said the Downtown Special Services District (SSD) is working with a consultant to implement an electronic parking enforcement system . He said the plan is in the early stages, but he would have more details as the work continues. Mr. Anderson said at this time, none of the lot hours, hours of availability or other regulations are intended to be changed. He said this is largely meant to replace the tire chalking-based enforcement system with a plate number-based system.

Mr. Phillips asked if the SSD is considering permanent changes based on the pandemic. Mr. Lipiner said the SSD would like be more accommodating of outdoor dining this season and into the future.

Report of the Planning & Economic Development Director

Mr. Anderson said a five-year lease has been signed with Amazon for tenancy at the Winstanley Logistics Center. He said it would generate a significant number of jobs. Mr. Phillips asked if the three tenants at the Logistics Center would employ approximately 1,000 workers. Mr. Anderson answered in the affirmative. Mr. Anderson said the project at 2-4 Pearl is continuing. He said the Board of Directors and SSD have agreed to work with the developer on a location for a dumpster and the use of a municipal parking lot for overnight parking.

Mr. Anderson said Dan Pesce has been hired as the Town's new Downtown Development Specialist. He said Mr. Pesce previously worked on economic development with a Downtown focus in Waterbury and would work to market downtown buildings and recruit businesses to Manchester in his new role. He said he would be introduced at a future meeting. Mr. Anderson said the Parkade plans for the Broad Street redevelopment project will go before the Planning and Zoning Commission in the coming weeks. Mr. Phillips asked if they would begin construction soon. Mr. Anderson said the plan is for this spring, but would ultimately depend on developer's ability to secure financing and the necessary permits.

Other Business

Ms. Koehler said PPP applications are still being processed and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program is open for applications until December 31st. She said the SBA is planning to offer a ‘Shuttered venue’ grant, but is not yet officially unveiled. She said several Manchester properties may qualify for the grant. She said the Connecticut Small Business Development Center is trying to put together roundtables to determine gaps in assistance programs.

Adjournment

Mr. Phillips made a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeLaura seconded and all members voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 am.