

NEWINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

February 3, 2021

Chairman Teresa Avey called the Zoom meeting of the Newington Economic Development Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

III. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present

Chairman Teresa Avey
Commissioner Dana Havens
Commissioner David Marsden
Commissioner Jerilyn Nagel
Commissioner Fernando Rosa
Commissioner Jay Slater
Commissioner Robert Rioux

Commissioners Absent

Commissioner Jennifer Ancona
Commissioner Clifford Stamm
Commissioner Linda Woods

IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Rosa moved to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2020 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Marsden. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion, with seven voting YEA.

V. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (Speakers limited to two minutes.)

None.

VI. **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT**

Chairman Avey reported that she did not attend the January meeting because it was for their executive board. She will report in February on any new members of the Chamber and on anything that they discussed.

VII. **OLD BUSINESS**

Chairman Avey reported that with the holidays, the idea of inviting friends to the page that Dana started was not followed up.

Teresa Avey
Town Clerk

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Commissioner Havens reported that some people were invited but nothing has been posted to the Facebook page as of yet, that it is still under construction. She indicated that people had a lot of questions about the site at 712 Cedar Street and the hotel that is being proposed for that site. Putting some information on the page about the hotel and the developer might put some people's minds at ease, or could cause more questions to arise.

Chairman Avey questioned Town Manager Keith Chapman about the hotel and the plans for 712 Cedar Street. and if he could shed any light on the subject?

The Town Manger indicated that the developer wants to construct an extended stay hotel that will have about 122 rooms and that the application is now in front of the Planning and Zoning Commission. It will take about 13 months to build at a cost of 10 to 11 million dollars and that will generate a sizable amount of money for the Town of Newington. There will be \$200,000 in real estate tax and there is a tax abatement that is being arranged with the developer. It's a company called Gold Coast Development. The Council has already approved the tax abatement if the development goes forward.

It will be located just east of the Mercury Oil gas station on the corner of Cedar and Fenn. And it will be just west of the National Welding site that is being purchased by another company from Texas, the Anthony properties.

The hotel itself is going to be a three to four story building and this company has hotels throughout the country. The company wants to expand and this may be the first one in Connecticut. They have hotels in Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Rhode Island, it's a pretty big company.

It will be an extended stay facility, which means if you are a professor at Central Connecticut University and you are on a sabbatical for teaching purposes, say for three months, you can stay in this type of a facility instead of renting an apartment for a year. The hotel is designed so the parents of students at Central, if there are activities going on will be able to stay for one night, or someone can stay for four weeks, or even months at a time. This is for extended stay, it's not for permanent residency.

It will be for long term for say, if a professor comes to Central for three months, they may occupy this space, and I'm sure that this company will have a long term arrangement with the staff at Central.

Chairman Avey compared this to similar extended stay hotel properties that she had dealing with in the past, and they can do one or two nights or stays of weeks, and months.

Commissioner Havens said that several people were concerned that it would turn into housing that the state would put people in there permanently or even semi permanently, and what guarantee do we have that it wouldn't turn into apartments, as opposed to just hotel rooms.

Keith Chapman indicated that the company is privately owned and the town would have no control over that, but if the company wants to be successful, they're going to serve the market as necessary. If someone's home burned down and they needed a place to stay while it got rebuilt, someone could be staying there for several months. This is not intended to be a permanent home for anyone.

There may be plans for a restaurant to serve breakfast for the people staying in the hotel, but it probably will not be open to the general public.

Commissioner Slater asked if there is going to be another set of lights on Fenn Road.

There will be service from the Starbucks Cedar Street but it will be a right turn in, right turn out. There will not be a left turn out to Cedar Street and they will be using Myra Cohen Way to access the site as well.

Keith Chapman indicated that this area would be pretty exciting over the next year and a half with the construction of the hotel, the development of the old National Welding site and that Richard Hayes is looking for further development on his site, between Starbucks and the gas station.

There is still interest in some of the vacant buildings in town even during the pandemic. There has been interest in 697 Cedar Street with an active seller and buyer so that could happen within the short term.

Commissioner Slater questioned the status of Bob's Stores and Keith Chapman indicated that they had worked out an agreement with the landlord and will be staying at their present location. The town is still working on the center of town, with the Keeney property and the old food store.

There are still plans for a restaurant in the old Bonefish Grill building with the new occupants trying to negotiate a lease with the property owner. The new owners don't seem to be in a rush to open because of Covid. The new owners are local and have restaurants within 20 miles of Newington and have several locations.

Commissioner Slater noted that there is a new tattoo place where the barber shop was which moved to Ferrari's location.

Hopefully the vaccine will help with people being able to get out and resume their normal activities and the businesses that are struggling will be able to hang on as things improve.

Commissioner Havens reported on the Facebook page, that there wasn't anything going on to post, but maybe should post links so the people could see the information on the new hotel.

Commissioner Slater suggested that maybe a brochure should be published during the next few months, but the Commission had not decided on what pictures should be included.

Commissioner Rioux said that he had never received any photos and as soon as he received them he would get his design team started, looking to get this done quickly.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

None

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Each speaker limited to two minutes.)

None

X. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Congratulations were given to Commissioner Rose on his retirement and wishes to enjoy more time away from the office.

Commissioner Havens asked if she should include the plans for the new hotel on the Facebook page and the Commission agreed that they will wait for another month before posting a picture of the hotel.

James Krupienski told the Commission that the rendering of the hotel was the one presented to the TPZ Commission and the Town Council.

Commissioner Havens proposed just a blurb about the company constructing the hotel, and emphasis that this is not the old National Welding site, and stress that this is an extended stay hotel, not a welfare motel.

The next meeting of the Commission is March 3, 2021.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Slater moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nagel. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Norine Addis,
Recording Secretary