

NEWINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

March 1, 2023

Chairman Theresa Avey called the regular Meeting of the Newington Economic Development Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present

Chairman Theresa Avey
Commissioner Mari Beatrice
Commissioner Dana Havens
Commissioner Jerilyn Nagel (7:11)
Commissioner Chip Stamm

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III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 4, 2023 meeting were approved on a motion by Commissioner Beatrice and seconded by Commissioner Stamm.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Chairman Avey introduced Paul Dickson, the new Town Planner who came to Newington from Meriden where he was for the last six and a half years. He was the Director of Development and Enforcement there. Prior to that he was in the Town of Groton, Planning Department with the responsibility of various projects, streetscape, zoning enforcement and land use processes.

V. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT

Leslie Civitello from the Newington Chamber mentioned that the Chamber was working on the State of the Town meeting scheduled for March 23, 2023 with the doors opening at 8:00 and the meeting starting at 8:30 a.m. The meeting will be held at the Senior and Disabled Center, 120 Cedar Street. This should be more accessible to the public than in previous years. Scheduled attendees are Matt Lesser, Gary Turco, Kate Farrer, Acting Town manager is supposed to speak, Mayor Beth and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Brummet.

It's scheduled as "Bring your own coffee"

The developer of the Keeney Manufacturing property did join the Chamber this last month and has been involved in marketing the property so the Chamber is looking to set up something with the developer and the property owner in the near future, some sort of open house type of event, walk-throughs. There are many members interested in seeing the inside of the building.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Beautification Committee

Commissioner Havens presented an idea based on the banners the Commission did last fall, and based on a location in Massachusetts, the Commission there put a business name on the banner, sold to businesses to have their name on it as a fund raiser. This Commission would have to find out if the proceeds could be kept by the Economic Development Commission for future projects, or would they have to be returned to the Town for Human Services. It was very well received the first year of the project and more business participated the second year of the project. The banner would have to be designed and the information should be reviewed by the entire Commission.

Chairman Avey is not aware of any budget for next year, since the entire budget has not been reviewed, and even if money is left over from this year it is not transferable to next budget year.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Avey advised the Commission that the new owner of the Keeney Manufacturing site would like to present his plans to the EDC with the possibility of having the April meeting be an in-person meeting to allow the developer to come to Town Hall and make his presentation using the larger screens rather than using personal computers.

Erik Hinkley indicated that the regular meeting in April was changed to the 12th of the month because the regular date was the first day of Passover and since that is the same date as the normal TPZ meeting so an in-person meeting will become problematic. The Commission could have a special meeting with the presentation the only item on the agenda. After discussion, the new meeting date for April will be the 6th, an in-person meeting with the only item on the agenda the remodeling of the Keeney Manufacturing building.

Commissioner Beatrice received a press release from an organization, Connecticut Main Street Center. Town Planner Dickson has received information from that organization, not dealing with them too much, but aware of the group. It seemed interesting because the organization has an assessment tool whereby a group of professionals come to the downtown main street area and do a four point assessment, identifying areas that are performing well, and also identifying areas of potential growth. They also give tools and difference types of guidance on how the economic development can be improved in the town center. This would give an objective view of the town center and focusing on areas in terms of development and growth. Commissioner Beatrice has the e-mail and will forward it to the Commission members so this can be discussed at the next meeting.

There is no fee schedule indicated and may be based on population and need. Town Planner Dickson will look into the fees if applicable. Commissioner Beatrice questioned if the fees would come from the EDC budget or from the Town Manager's budget.

Erik Hinckley that there may be some accounts that could fund this on the Planning side, and previously any economic development was funded out of the previous Town Manger's budget

since the Economic Development was structured with town employees and that is continuing now.

Commissioner Beatrice indicated that this is something that could be explored and would be giving EDC an outline and an indication of where future programs could expand development.

Chairman Avey indicated that there was some money still in this year's budget so it might be something that we wait until just before the fiscal year ends and if it is something that we want to do, sign up for the following year, or look into it for 2023-2024 but pay for it from this year's budget.

VIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

IX. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Havens was reviewing the Main Street program and it seems to be a tool for Economic Development directors and Town Planners, and does not indicate that it is fee based. If it is not fee based it might be something worthwhile for the Commission to go forward with. Commissioner Beatrice indicated that it seems to be very data driven, and they seem to look at population, traffic and parking and comparing to communities similar to Newington so the numbers are always very helpful to have giving the Commission strong data to begin with, especially when requesting funding.

Chairman Avey reminded the members that the Hartford Courant has their "Best Of" and there are many businesses here in town that are on that list, and consider voting for them. There are some from the Chamber that are on the list and some that are not from the Chamber and the small businesses are what keeps the town going, just trying to survive.

Commissioner Nagel commented that she was on the Health District Commission and the problem in Newington at the moment is the state changed the regulations for restaurants and cleanliness so the Hartford Courant published all of the places, there are about 19 of them in Newington that are in the paper indicating they are a bad restaurant because they got nailed, so just an FYI. It wasn't just rating the restaurants, they published what they did wrong.

Erik Hinckley gave an update on Keeney Manufacturing. They have applied for a demo permit to demolish the existing land bridge between the warehouse and the front office building. They are also going to be starting work on the façade as well, peeling off the brick, the overlays and get back to the more art deco look, and that was part of his presentation that he wants to give as well. There should be, hopefully in the next few weeks some more activity there.

Chairman Avey heard that Pizza Hut is coming to town and there has been contact with them that started over the summer so they seem to be moving slowly but they do have a location in

mind but they do have to go through a special permitting process with TPZ as do all restaurants in town.

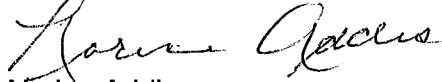
Bargain House furniture just opened up in the old Dick's space, a discount furniture store with a couple of other stores in New York.

X. ADJOURN

Commissioner Avey thanked everyone at the meeting and reminded them that the April meeting would be in-person on April 6th.

Commissioner Havens moved to adjourn the meeting which was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Norine Addis,
Recording Secretary