

REGULAR MEETING
CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Tuesday, January 15, 2019
7:30 a.m. – Room 207/209 – Town Hall

Commissioners Present:

David Pelletier, Derek Gromko, Don Dobbs, Dan O’Connell, William Stanley

Absent: Steve Sidoruk, Peter Nichols

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Guests:

Bill Voelker, Town Planner, Robert deJongh, Chairman of Inland Wetland and Watercourses Commission, Yetta Auger, President of Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, Eric Burns, CCSU.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pelletier called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called.

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

A quorum was present.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

V. WELCOME ERIC BURNS

Mr. Pelletier introduced Eric Burns, a geography student at CCSU, who is interested in learning more about the EDC. He is working on a historical project with the CT Trust for Historic Preservation.

**VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Regular Meeting – October 16, 2018
Special Meeting – November 27, 2018**

Mr. Stanley made a motion to accept minutes for regular meeting – October 16, 2018. Mr. Dobbs seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Stanley made a motion to accept minutes for special meeting – November 27, 2018. Mr. Dobbs seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

VII. Communications

Topics will be covered in the coordinator's report.

VIII. Business

- a) Discussion with Town Planner Bill Voelker Re: Highland Avenue Corridor

Mr. Voelker reported on the proposed overlay district. Projects can consist of commercial and mixed-used developments or buildings. They will adhere to specific characteristics to structural design, buffers, and transition elements adhering to the town's Plan of Conservation and Development. The overlay district will allow for more creative uses of empty parcels of land or buildings that have frontage on Route 10. A three acre minimum lot size is a requirement of the overlay district. Mr. Voelker said that this is to promote parcels of greater scale than what currently exists.

Developers can take a "design-as-you-go approach" to be used in a master plan supported by the Planning & Zoning Commission and subject to preliminary and neighborhood reviews. This approach allows developers to design projects using broad standards. Mr. Voelker refers to this as "content-sensitive design." Properties subject to the overlay district include those along the west side of Highland Avenue which are one acre in size. Larger properties are on the east side of Highland Avenue. The properties present challenges; topography and wetlands. The "design-as-you-go approach" gives developers the flexibility to produce something different for the area. An overlay district will give the commission more power to veto projects. A public hearing is scheduled on March 25, 2019, where there will be support and attendance by members of the EDC, according to Mr. Pelletier.

b) Speakers for Future Meetings

It was suggested to invite Brian Bedard, President, Elim Park, and Julie Anderson, Head of School at Cheshire Academy, to future meetings. Please contact Mr. Sitko with suggestions for speakers at upcoming meetings.

c) Tax Increment Financing

The draft of the TIF District Master Plan has been forwarded to the town manager. The town council may forward the plan to the Planning & Zoning Commission (P&ZC) at its meeting on January 15. The council's request of the commission is that it review the draft, in accordance with Section 8-24 of the CGS, and confirm that the plan complies with the town's Plan of Conservation & Development.

d) Liaison Reports

Yetta Auger, president of the chamber of commerce, reported that the educational series continues and that students from Quinnipiac University are spotlighting Cheshire businesses as part of their school projects. WQUN is going off the air. The chamber had a standing program on Mondays to promote local businesses. The chamber now has 340 members. The chamber will recognize Joan Nardello, long-time secretary, who is retiring, at the annual meeting on January 31. Don Dobbs will be also be recognized as citizen of the year, receiving the Sheldon Dill Community Service Award.

e) Coordinator's Report

- The town has a \$750,000 Brownfields Remediation Grant from the CT Department of Economic and Community Development for Ball and Socket Arts. A portion of the grant money will be used to remediate the wooden building off Willow Street. It is hoped that this work will be completed by spring. This remediation will convey to the public that work is being done. The vision for the site is an arts hub with galleries, performance centers, restaurants, shops, and other amenities. Other restoration and remediation projects are planned for the site. Next year marks Cheshire's 325th anniversary and Ball and Socket Arts will be a participant.

- Pier 1, located at 935 South Main Street, will be closing in April after being in business for 14 years. Mr. Sitko said that this is a reflection of the economy and e-commerce buying.
- Whole Foods is expected to submit plans for an 86,600 SF addition. The existing building is 155,750 SF. A map showing the proposed expansion was included in the meeting package. At an upcoming meeting, habitat areas will be addressed as well as the possibility for a greenhouse on site.
- Medical office facility of 3,450 SF at 1008 South Main Street. Work on John Ricci's building will continue through into the spring.
- Accel International purchased the former "Alexion" property for a price of \$4,775,000. It expects to open in the first quarter of 2019. Accel has plants in Meriden and Indiana and produces wire and specialty wire products. It will maintain its facility in Meriden.
- Perfectly Prepared, in the former Cugino's Restaurant, opened on October 25 with a ribbon cutting ceremony. It offers catering, prepared "grab-and-go" meals, and a small restaurant seating area. Riverhouse Hospitality, which is located at Goodspeed Station in Haddam, runs Perfectly Prepared and The Society Room in Hartford.
- On November 28, 2018, members of the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) reviewed a feasibility application for a mixed-use subdivision being considered for 1953 and 2037 Highland Avenue. Tri-Star Development, LLC is the group behind the proposal. It is proposing that a sewer system similar to one planned by WS be installed. It will include a forced water main running from the development onto Highland Avenue and beneath the bridge, crossing Interstate 691. It will allow gravity to take effluent to the existing pipeline on East Johnson Avenue. A private pump station will be built according to town requirements. Discussions will continue on this application.

- Town officials hope to acquire a parcel of land off Railroad Avenue for more parking for the Cheshire Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. A 2.2-acre residential property west of the trail, if acquired, will be developed into a 15-space parking area for trail users. To help with funding, an application has been submitted for a Connecticut Recreational Trails Program Grant administered by the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. With this grant, the Town will only be responsible for project cost of \$300,000. There are currently 12 dedicated parking spaces available at the trail. Preliminary studies show that there could be over 100,000 trips per year on the trail.
- Recently donated funds from an area nonprofit will be used for the installation of two new historic signs for the Cornwall Avenue to West Main Street segment of the trail. The donation of \$3,778 was received from the Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trail Association. Tim Slocum, who serves on the town council, and Jeanne Chesanow, town historian, designed the signs.
- Economic development activities/projects summary for November, 2018 is in today's packet.

IX. Adjournment

Mr. Pelletier adjourned the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Dawn Guite, Recording Secretary, EDC