

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2014 AT 7:30 A.M.  
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL – 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
ROOM 207/209**

Commissioners Present:

Vice Chairman William Stanley, Lori Rusnack, Steve Sidoruk, and Ray Voelker

Commissioner Absent:

Chairman David Pelletier, Dan O'Connell and Michael Ecke

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

Jeffrey Guimond and Ilone Somogyi of Ball & Socket Arts (departed at 8:22 a.m.)

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairman Pelletier called the meeting to order at 7:38 a.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

The roll was called.

**III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM**

It was determined that a quorum was present.

**IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Regular Meeting May 20, 2014**

**MOTION** by Ms. Rusnack that the minutes from the May 20, 2014 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted as submitted. **SECONDED** by Mr. Sidoruk.

The motion passed unanimously by all present.

## **VI. COMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Sitko stated that articles and communications are embedded within this meeting's packet.

## **VII. BUSINESS**

### **A) Discussion with Representatives of Ball & Socket Arts**

Chairman Pelletier and Commissioners welcomed Jeffrey Guimond and Ilone Somogyi of Ball & Socket Arts to the Economic Development Commission.

Mr. Guimond stated that he and Ms. Somogyi as well as their other partners are graduates of Cheshire High School's Class of 1986 and everyone is some type of art profession. The group has always admired the long, unique history of the Ball & Socket property and when they saw that the property was for sale they began talking about what a great location the property would be for an Arts Center. The group formed a non-profit organization with the plan to revitalize the historic buildings and property but in the mean time have had to deal with extensive property negotiations with the current owner and with remediation of the property due to Brownfield concerns. The State of Connecticut has stepped up to help with grant funding for the remediation of the property as well as offering a 100% loan-financing program to help acquire the property. The current sales price of the property is \$725,000 for the 3-acre site and the group is hopeful the closing on the property will happen this Summer.

Ms. Somogyi reviewed the plans for the proposed 70,000 square foot Ball & Socket Arts Center with the Economic Development Commission. She noted the Phase 1 section of the project, which will be presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission starting on June 23<sup>rd</sup> at their Public Hearing. The proposed multi purpose Arts Center will have over 200 parking spaces on site for visual performing arts, galleries for art displays, retail art related spaces, commercial galleries, a food court, bar area and fine dining restaurant with a possible teaching kitchen, cinema / lecture hall space, a main lobby, music rehearsal space and a small museum based on local history. There are also plans for and educational wing with an art library and dance / yoga studios on the second floor. Not all of this will be done in Phase 1 but Ms. Somogyi noted that the when the items marked for Phase 2 are started additional parking will be required for the project.

Vice Chairman Stanley asked about the proposed timeline for this project and Ms. Somogyi replied that they are optimistic for a Summer 2016 opening for at least some of the Phase 1 facilities. She noted that additional funding would be needed for the build out, adding that there will be no new structures built on the property. The group is planning to register the Ball & Socket property with the State and Federal National Historic Property Registries.

The buildings will need many new windows, while many others can still be restored. There will be new heating and cooling equipment needed for the buildings as well as electrical

systems. Ms. Somogyi noted that 1 building on the property is proposed to come down but it is not historic.

Ms. Rusnack asked the group plans to manage the property? Ms. Somogyi explained that they plan to hire a staff to oversee the property and predict when the property is up and completely running they would have around 75 employees

Mr. Guimond noted that the buildings are in very good shape structurally still but there are the environmental issues with the property and there are areas of the roof that leak but otherwise the buildings are very sound. He also offered to arrange a tour of the Ball & Socket property for the Commission, as he pointed out it is a very unique and impressive property when you see it. He also talked about a grant from the CT Trust for Historic Preservation that will help with marketing and operations plans for the project.

Mr. Sitko asked what the most important part / venue of the Phase 1 of this project? Mr. Guimond replied the art gallery, restaurant, lobby space and retail. Mr. Sitko suggested to the Economic Development Commission that if they wanted to, a letter of support for this project could be submitted to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Mr. Guimond asked Mr. Sitko what the Town's plans were for this area of West Main Street for the near future? Mr. Sitko noted that the Linear Trail expansion plans for the next few years will be a great tie in with this proposed Art Center project at the Ball & Socket property. He explained that he is working on funding to expand the sidewalks on the north side of West Main Street to help bring pedestrian traffic to the area and revitalize the area. Mr. Sitko also talked about creating a village center on West Main Street as he sees enormous potential for Cheshire with all these plans for the area.

Mr. Sidoruk suggest the group make a video for the project and Ms. Somogyi replied that they are already working on that.

Mr. Sitko mentioned that the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation is not happy with just the "Island of refuge" that was installed for crossing West Main Street and they are now talking about installing the HAWK system next year to help with pedestrian crossing in the area.

Members thanked Mr. Guimond and Ms. Somogyi of Ball & Socket Arts for coming to speak to the Economic Development Commission this morning and many stated they would be interested if a tour could be arranged of the Ball & Socket property.

## B) Speakers for Future Meetings

Commissioners talked about inviting representatives of Bozzutos, Big Y, Macy's and W/S Development to speak to the Commission in the near future. It was also suggested that a representative of Pratt & Whitney or Yale University's Technology Division would be a good speaker for the Commission.

## C) Incentive Policy

Mr. Sitko reported that the Town Council would be reviewing the proposed Incentive Policy tonight that the Economic Development Commission approved last month. Any Commission members that are available are welcome to attend the 7:30pm meeting in Council Chambers.

## D) STEAP Grant

Mr. Sitko reported that the Town recently learned they would be receiving a \$500,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant to design and construct sidewalks on the north side of West Main Street from Grove Street to Maple Avenue. While this is great news there is still additional funding needed for this project. Therefore the Town has also applied for a \$ 350,000 grant from the Main Street Investment Fund for this sidewalk project and he hopes to hear the award recipients from this program later this Summer.

## E) Program with Department of Labor

Mr. Sitko reminded the Commissioners of a successful program that they hosted in 2012 for Cheshire employers with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's Small Business Express Program. Since then the Department of Labor has developed a number of incentive, including training grants, tax credits and wage reimbursements for business expansions and new hiring. Mr. Sitko asked the Commission if they would be interested in hosting a program again for Cheshire companies with the Department of Labor and the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce. Commissioners were in agreement that this would be a great event to bring to Cheshire and suggested that the program be run in September, if possible.

## F) Summer Schedule

Commissioners discussed canceling the July and August Economic Development Commission regular meetings unless something pressing comes up.

**MOTION** by Ms. Rusnack that the Economic Development Commission suspend their July and August 2014 regular meetings. **SECONDED** by Mr. Sidoruk.

The motion passed unanimously by all present.

## G) Liaison Reports

There were no liaisons present to report to the Commission.

## H) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko stated that the former Pink Petunia property on West Main Street is being proposed for a zone change to an R-20A zone and the property is under contract with a dentist.

An article about solar panels at Napoli Foods and Whole Foods is in this meeting's packet.

Mr. Sitko talked about some potential interest and activity in the Interchange Zone properties and gave an update on the status of the Regional Planning consolidation. He noted that the Town Council will likely refer this to their Ordinance Review Committee tonight so that they can start to review this consolidation for Cheshire.

Mr. Sitko noted that the Planning & Zoning Commission is working hard to update the Plan of Conservation and Development for Cheshire. The group will likely want to speak with the Economic Development Commission as they go through this process.

As far as Mr. Sitko knows, W/S Development is still planning to start their site preparation by year-end and have hopes of having a few stores open by the start of the 2015 Holiday season.

Mr. Sitko stated that he is working with NE Transportation to tie into the W/S Development and CT Fasttrack bus line for service in the Interchange Zone and Industrial Park from Waterbury.

Trinity Solar, which designs and installs solar arrays, is leasing space on West Johnson Avenue behind the Webster Bank building.

Mr. Sitko reviewed the estimated completion timeline for the Farmington Canal Heritage Greenway noting that the West Main Street to Jarvis Street section is planned to be completed next year. The Jarvis Street to Southington town line section is scheduled for 2016 and the Cornwall Avenue to West Main Street section should be completed in 2017. He also talked about the HAWK system that the State of Connecticut is looking into installing on West Main Street to help pedestrians cross the roadway.

## I) Other

None.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Chairman Stanley adjourned the June 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski  
Recording Secretary