

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES of the Meeting of May 27, 2020

A virtual/telephonic meeting was held via Zoom as the result of publicly declared CoVID-19 state emergency necessitating remote meetings

Commissioners present: Ani Chaghatzbanian, Vice Chair; Michael Lynch; Jessica Stram; Albert Franke

Advisors present: Julie Nash; Paige Miglio; Pamela Staneski

Others present: Alderman Gregory Harla; Alderman Win Smith; Cassandra Schull

Commissioners not present: Michael Crowley; Peter Cozzolino; John DePalma

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Chaghatzbanian called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 22, 2020 MEETING

Ms Stram and Mr. Franke made and seconded a motion to approve the minutes of April 22, 2020. Unanimously approved.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT & INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS – None

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

V. EDC PROJECT DISCUSSION – CO-WORKING SPACE: FEASIBILITY STUDY

Ms Chaghatzbanian opened a discussion on revisiting co-working space initiative and asked for input on determining interest and how to create a space in Milford. Ms Miglio commented on opening Chamber meeting room for their members. Ms Staneski stated that CoVID-19 has escalated the need for small meeting spaces in Milford and spoke about opportunities to market it outside of our region. Ms Miglio asked about Wheelers Farm Road office building. Mr. Franke noted that location as logical option; he suggested this Commission determine demand as first step then get input from property owners and set up revenue model that works for them. Ms Staneski recognized the need for owners to see profit in the project adding that any business owner would change their model based on the demand. Ms Stram discussed the need for alternative workspaces for companies of all sizes. Mr. Lynch suggested this Commission discuss before the next meeting. Director Nash expressed support for EDC to work on this project with help from advisors; she suggested getting some action items today. Ms Chaghatzbanian proposed this Commission discuss over the next couple weeks to identify what to include in the survey and contact people that might be interested; she set a deadline of June 8th for action items and questions.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY – NASH

A. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY REPORT

Director Nash reported on Milford unemployment data. The rate in the city has been 2.7% to 3.2% over past couple of years; now 8.2% for April. She expects more accurate numbers next month. New business registrations have been 24-45 per month and are down to 7 for May. She continues to field phone calls and emails from various businesses as well as provide consultation on PPP and EIDL programs. She also reported on creating an advisory group for businesses to address reopening processes, challenges and how the city can assist with specific needs from each sector. The group is comprised of representatives from manufacturing, retail, real estate, financial, restaurant and health care.

B. MAY 20TH REOPENING

Director Nash commented on state guidelines for businesses to reopen on May 20th. City departments worked all weekend to create zoning outlines, distribute local rules and assist with applications and self-certifications. A discussion ensued on outdoor dining.

C. DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT UPDATE – None

VII. STANDING ITEMS & COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. REOPEN MILFORD ADVISORY GROUP

Mr. Franke is working with the reopening advisory group as member of EDC and MPI; he also has a real estate subgroup that meets weekly. He reported on sales, showings, distributing marketing materials and the issue of consumer confidence in the market. He is surveying offices in Milford, contacting office managers to find out their needs, issues they are seeing and getting information on Governor's orders out to them. He commented on short term rentals, adhering to realtor guidelines and protocols to keep clients and agents safe.

B. TOURISM

Ms Miglio reported on upcoming virtual events at the MAC. They have been touring properties in the city to find outdoor event spaces and are working with the health department on setting guidelines for summer theater camp. She spoke about organizing outdoor entertainment in restaurant parking lots and would like task forces to work together to support arts and tourism. Director Nash suggested EDC commissioners lead those conversations, conduct offline talks on collaborations and present ideas at next meeting. Ms Miglio also mentioned availability of the MAC as rental for family events, parties and talked about creating small popup events in parks around the city.

C. CHAMBER

Ms Staneski talked about working with Julie as advisors for planning reopening of Milford businesses; they are sharing state guidelines with industry members, giving information on PPP and EIDL programs and helping them get back in operation. The Chamber has become distributor of thermometers for small businesses and they received face shields from Edgewell for their members. She also commented that the Chamber is operating with a reduced staff and volunteers.

D. VISITATION REPORTS – None

VIII. OLD BUSINESS – None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

Alderman Smith commented on moving forward to get businesses running again. He talked about the survey and importance of volunteers to roll out events. Discussion ensued on usage of downtown spaces for events.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 24th

The meeting was adjourned at 1:04 pm. A motion was unanimously carried to finalize the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee Diamond
Recorder