

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES of the Meeting of June 24, 2020

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

Commissioners present:

Michael Crowley, Chairman; Ani Chaghatzbanian, Vice Chair; Michael Lynch; Jessica Stram; Albert Franke; Peter Cozzolino

Advisors & Aldermen Liaisons present:

Julie Nash; Paige Miglio; Pamela Staneski; Alderman Win Smith

Commissioners not present:

John DePalma

Others present:

Ken Sterba – General Manager, Centennial/Connecticut Post Mall

Steven Levin – CEO Centennial

Don Poland, PhD, AICP – Managing Director, Planning and Strategy, Goman+York Property Advisors

Jon Meshel – SVP Development Centennial

Whitney Livingston – CEO Centennial

Oliver Robinson – Centennial, EVP development

Patrick McGloin – Gaffney Bennett PR, on behalf of Centennial

John Knuff – zoning counsel

Amy Souchuns – zoning counsel

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Chairman Crowley called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MAY 27, 2020 MEETING

Mr. Lynch and Mr. Crowley made and seconded a motion to approve the minutes of May 27, 2020.

Unanimously approved.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT & INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Chairman Crowley introduced representatives from Centennial Real Estate to talk about their plans for Connecticut Post Mall.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Representatives from Centennial Real Estate, with support from zoning counselors, made a presentation regarding their application for a zoning regulation amendment at CT Post Mall. The panel described the project as mixed use: residential units with amenities and outdoor spaces along with options for restaurants, retail, arts, entertainment, office space, medical facility, hotel. They are in early planning stages and are asking for EDC support for the project. Discussion on types of amenities, projections for public school enrollment, pupil expenditure, tax revenues and job creation.

Chairman Crowley suggested this Commission discuss internally and put together questions for the next meeting. Director Nash offered to set up a virtual meeting next week to continue the discussion.

Links

Centennial master plans: www.thenewhatthorn.com, www.thenewmainplace.com

Meeting recording: [https://zoom.us/rec/share/vZZKJa-](https://zoom.us/rec/share/vZZKJa-o51lJadbJ6lnZeLc8I57Daaa8hihPq6EOzkzmL8EnVknNNBTQ3o0sgb0A)

[o51lJadbJ6lnZeLc8I57Daaa8hihPq6EOzkzmL8EnVknNNBTQ3o0sgb0A](https://zoom.us/rec/share/vZZKJa-o51lJadbJ6lnZeLc8I57Daaa8hihPq6EOzkzmL8EnVknNNBTQ3o0sgb0A) Password: 5w&uV@=y

V. EDC PROJECT DISCUSSION

Chairman Crowley gave an update on the co-working space survey.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Director Nash reported on unemployment data. Milford was at 9.2% for May compared to 3.4% last year. Connecticut was 9.3% and 13% for the nation. Numbers are less than expected and could dip again as people go back to work. She is helping workforce development identify open positions in Milford. Discussion ensued on challenges of getting people back to work with extension of unemployment benefits.

Director Nash reported on new business starts for May. She commented on feedback from Reopen Milford advisory group; they are reporting better news than anticipated. She is still working with businesses on EIDL and PPP programs. She announced a webinar on June 25th with DECD Commissioner to talk about reopening and what to expect in next phase. There will also be a meeting on July 1st with Randy Fiveash from CT Office of Tourism.

VII. STANDING ITEMS & COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. REOPEN MILFORD ADVISORY GROUP

Mr. Franke reported on activities in the real estate sector. Mr. Cozzolino asked about the downtown development project. Director Nash responded there will be 12,000 sq ft of retail, 50 apartments and underground parking. They should be breaking ground in the next few months.

B. TOURISM

Ms Miglio reported on Pantochino's Halloween drive-in event and Summer Pop Ups on Saturdays. They are working on plans to move into Parsons auditorium and looking for outdoor venue while still hosting virtual events. She said the tourism task force is meeting biweekly and talked about the need for other groups to work together. Director Nash asked for help in recruiting representatives from businesses downtown and Walnut Beach to attend the tourism meetings. Discussion on engaging the community in virtual events. Alderman Smith commented on the potential for a smaller Oyster Festival.

C. CHAMBER

Ms Staneski commented on the Chambers' support for zoning amendment at CT Post Mall. She spoke about the importance that the phases include plan of conservation and development, historical values, and support economic activity and growth.

The Chamber is still distributing masks and thermometers and advising businesses on EIDL and PPP programs. She talked about the role of the Chamber as a connector and their plans to open offices in different districts in Milford. They are planning Milford Restaurant Week for the next reopening phase and held their scholarship award ceremony on the lawn.

Mr. Franke asked what problems businesses are having with reopening. Ms. Staneski said it has been difficult to bring employees back and they are concerned about extension of unemployment benefits for another 6 months. She commented about getting the co-working space survey out to learn what the needs are.

There will be no golf tournament this year. They are planning a smaller scale fundraiser in its place. They are looking for a space for local Milford band to play on August 7th. Ms Miglio stated she booked a band for September 10th. She also commented on the need for more scholarships for students going into health and medical field.

Ms Staneski continues to work with businesses on EIDL, PPP and talked about the State of City address. They are still accepting entries for the Best of Milford contest; so far 70+ businesses have registered. She is also having conversations about offering employee training, education, and certification programs. She also spoke to Superintendent Cutaia about meeting with manufacturers to find out what skill sets are needed in their industry. She commented about small businesses slowly reopening. Discussion continued on extension of unemployment benefits and challenge for parents with reopening schools in the fall.

D. PERMIT & LAND USE – None

E. VISITATION REPORTS – None

VIII. OLD BUSINESS – None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Franke reported on a request for EDC support for a zoning regulation amendment to replace 6 traditional billboards along I-95 with digital billboards. A discussion ensued.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 22nd

There will be no regular meeting in August

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 pm. A motion was unanimously carried to finalize the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee Diamond
Recorder