

**Town of Fairfield**  
**Office of Community & Economic Development**  
**Minutes of Economic Development Commission Meeting**

September 9, 2010

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting on September 9, 2010 at 8:00 a.m. in the Old Town Hall Conference Room.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Peter Penczer, Chairman; Maureen Abrahamson; Chris LaSala

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development; Don Peterson; Sally Parker, Ross Ogden; Ray Rizzio; Joe Devonshuk, TP&Z

**Distributions:** Fairfield Plan of Conservation and Development, Draft Commerce Drive Station Area Addition to POCD

Fairfield Zoning Amendment Recommendations, Commerce Drive Station Area Study

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 8:10 a.m.

*Minutes*

The minutes of May 11, 2010 were approved.

*Commerce Drive Planning Study*

Mr. Devonshuk referred to the Commerce Drive Station Area Study and the Draft Commerce Drive Station Area Addition to POCD. He said these were the result of the Commerce Drive Study performed by the Regional Plan Association in conjunction with the P & Z and the Department of Housing and Economic Development. There will be one more meeting of the T P & Z to review the draft and then it will move to a public hearing. He said this was an effort to move beyond case-by-case zoning changes. If adopted, the plan will provide a new zone in which office and retail development will be permitted. Mr. Penczer mentioned that currently the area is heavily restaurant and auto in usage and that these businesses have invested in their improvements. Mr. Devonshuk said the P & Z felt that the auto businesses were a transitional use of the property. Mr. Penczer pointed out that these uses will be considered pre-existing and non-conforming and that this will affect their taxing status. Mr. Devonshuk said all issues are up for discussion.

Mr. Devonshuk asked for reaction to the plan by the commissioners. Mr. LaSala asked how existing property owners are reacting to the plan. Mr. Penczer said several buildings

(777 and 1375 Commerce Drive) were permitted uses when they were built. He said the plan would be somewhat helpful though he said the boundaries should be expanded toward the Creek. Ms. Abrahamson asked if residential usage would be permitted and to what extent. Mr. Devonshuk said it would be permitted in the present form. He said as proposed, the uses would not result in an influx of school-aged children. Mr. Penczer said the taxes generated by condos would exceed that generated by commercial uses. Mr. Devonshuk said responded to Mr. LaSala's question about affordable housing by saying that state statutes mandate such housing for each community. Mr. Barnhart said that Stamford requires developers to provide a set-aside amount of money to support affordable housing in the city. He said it is single-family units that drive the school enrollment. There is a need to provide options for people to live in Fairfield.

Mr. LaSala asked if there were features such as walking and biking trails in the area. Mr. Devonshuk answered that these were part of the plans as a result of the charette that concluded the preliminary planning. Mr. Penczer asked what the time line was regarding the plan. Mr. Devonshuk said the P & Z would have another meeting with the consultant and there should be a public meeting in December or January. He emphasized that the P & Z wants this area to be an economic generator as it was 40 years ago. Mr. Barnhart said this matter would be on the agenda for the next several months. He referred the commissioners to the town web site for detailed information about the plan.

### ***5545 Park Avenue***

Mr. Rizzio presented a proposal for use of this property. His group proposes to build a 25,000 square foot facility to house medical offices. It would be a cooperative use by Yale and Bridgeport Hospital. It would keep the property as a tax paying status. He mentioned that his company has approval from the state to make a true rotary at the Merritt Parkway exit that would serve the property.

Questions from commissioners included whether the building will be visible from the Parkway and whether there would be 24-hour usage. Mr. Rizzio said the building would not be visible and that it would not be used as a 24-hour facility. It will provide essential services to compliment facilities that exist in the area such as the medical building across the street and the Norma Phriem center to open soon. Mr. Penczer said the EDC would send a letter supporting the development.

### ***Train Station Project***

Mr. Barnhart said he is now the project manager. He is very pleased with the progress and work of the contractor managing the site work. The same contractor, Guerra Construction, is managing the intersection work. Mr. LaSala asked what is included in the contract. Mr. Barnhart said it includes remediating the site, wetland management and restoration, the access road, utilities along the road and the parking lot. Mr. LaSala asked about whether there is to be a station building. Mr. Barnhart said there is none planned now but that he would encourage the developer to put footings in now for a future facility. Mr. Penczer asked if there would be partial service after the first of the year. Mr.

Barnhart said the decision would be Metro North's. He said a lack of parking at the station would impact neighbors if the station opened. Mr. Ross asked what the land would look like. Mr. Barnhart said it would be seeded and landscaped.

***Other Business***

Ms. Abrahamson mentioned the need for recycling bins on the Post Road. She is in contact with the Solid Waste Department on this. She also asked that the process be started to address holiday traffic in downtown. Mr. Barnhart said he would work with her on this.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

The next meeting is October 7, 2010.

Respectfully submitted:

Gretchen Goethner