

Town of Fairfield

Office of Community & Economic Development

Minutes of Economic Development Commission Meeting

January 6, 2011

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting on January 6, 2011 at 8:00 a.m. in the Old Town Hall Conference Room.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Penczer, Chairman; Sally Ward; Chris LaSala; Brian Silvestro; Maureen Abrahamson

PRESENT: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development; David Kooris, Regional Plan Association; Joe Devonshuk, Town Planning & Zoning Office; Don Peterson; Ross Ogden, Abbey Road Partners; Peter Ambrose

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of December 9, 2010 were approved.

Commerce Drive Planning Study

David Kooris, V.P. of the Regional Plan Association, reviewed the proposals for the Commerce Drive development area. These have been developed through the efforts of RPA, the TP& Z and the Housing and Economic Development Department. The focal point and impetus for the plan is the new transportation center scheduled to open in the fall of 2011. Mr. Kooris said the goal was to provide transit oriented, mixed use zoning in place of the current industrial zoning.

The proposal presents three zones:

Zone 1 affects properties within a half-mile of the station. Conditions would be eliminated that would result in hazardous conditions for pedestrians. Additional design guidelines would be instituted that would encourage walking within the area. There would be some changes to the parking requirements in the zone.

Zone 2 would be the focus of properties within a quarter mile of the station. A transit oriented development park is envisioned. This would allow for higher

density building as well as provisions for users to walk to transportation sources and amenities.

Zone 3 would extend to the Black Rock Turnpike corridor and would include some designed industrial properties. Mr. Devonshuk said the TP&Z did not want to preclude potential investment in high tech or other future industrial development.

Mr. Barnhart said the TP & Z would hold a public hearing on the plan in February.

Questions from the Commissioners:

Mr. LaSala asked if there was anything else the town or state can do to facilitate the implementation of the plan. Mr. Devonshuk said the decision would be in the hands of the P & Z and suggested that Commissioners direct questions to them and attend the hearings. Mr. Kooris said there were three area outside of the town's control: decisions by the state traffic commission; the Black Rock traffic circle design; control of some aspects by the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency.

Ms. Abrahamson said that while there is a benefit to having a residential component to the plan, the current discussion about redistricting of the school system might color the attitude toward housing in the area.

Mr. LaSala asked if the town would rather see commercial or residential development on this site. Mr. Devonshuk said he would like to see regulations that would support the highest and best uses of the property. Mr. LaSala asked what the downside would be if residential uses were not included. Mr. Devonshuk said residential development is often the driver of other development. Mr. Kooris emphasized the desirability of encouraging young families to settle in town. Mr. Penczer said Connecticut has been slowly losing the population in the 24-34 year old bracket.

Questions from the public:

Ms. Parker, an alternate member of the P & Z, said that she thinks the big issue is the density factor. She suggested bringing visuals as part of a presentation. Mr. Ogden asked when the new zoning regulations would go into effect, should they be adopted. Mr. Devonshuk said it could possibly happen before the train station opens. Mr. Ogden asked if the EDC would be an advocate for redesigning the traffic circle. The consensus was "yes." Ms. Abrahamson emphasized that a plan needs to be in place, ready to implement when the economy improves.

Mr. Barnhart said there would be a discussion of the goals of the EDC at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

The next meeting is February 3, 2011.

Respectfully submitted:

Gretchen Goethner