

Town of Fairfield

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

January 12, 2012

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting on January 12, 2012 at 8:00 a.m. in the Old Town Hall Conference Room.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Penczer, Chairman; Brian Silvestro; Abbas Nadim; Maureen Abrahamson; Chris LaSala; Don Peterson

ALSO PRESENT: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 8:02 a.m.

Minutes:

The minutes of December 8, 2011 were approved.

Exide

Mr. Barnhart said there would be a public information meeting on January 19 at 7:30 p.m. at Roger Ludlow Middle School regarding the plan to clean Mill River. Representatives of Exide and the State DEP will brief the Conservation Commission as to the next phase of the remediation plan. An information meeting will be held at a later date for the general public. Mr. Barnhart said a remediation action plan should be completed by spring with dredging finished by the end of 2013. Mr. Penczer mentioned that the site would be ready for development in 2014.

Business Retention Program

Mr. Barnhart said there was a recent meeting, Reinventing Connecticut, which outlined a small business development plan. There will be an array of aid packages available. Commissioners are asked to refer potential participants to Mr. Barnhart. Mr. Nadim asked if there was any discussion of ways to support new business development such as tax reform and infrastructure improvements. Mr. Barnhart said the group is looking into regulatory reform for the long term. Mr. Penczer referenced a recent state law that affects part time workers. He mentioned its adverse influence on restaurants. Mr. LaSala suggested the EDC send a letter to legislators in support of changes to the legislation.

Mr. Penczer asked if there had been any response to the town's request for a grant to be used to study improvements to downtown Fairfield. Mr. Barnhart said he expected a reply by early January.

Mr. Barnhart said UI would be sponsoring a small business forum to present options for energy conservation and incentives. Ms. Abrahamson said her business took advantage of a number of the offerings and that she had seen substantial savings in her bills.

Mr. Barnhart referred to the need for a survey of businesses. There is opportunity for redevelopment of sites such as the former Syms and Fitness Edge buildings.

Mr. Barnhart said there is a need to re-evaluate the communications web site of the Community and Economic Development Department. He asked the commissioners to critique the current site and those of some other communities. One possibility is to take the material 'off site.' He is working on a new marketing video to promote the business aspects of Fairfield.

Mr. Barnhart listed some priorities for promotional topics:

- Update space availability
- Develop meetings around the arts and culture
- Originate a major festival such as a Fall Restaurant week

Ms. Abrahamson asked if there was any activity on the Community Theater. Mr. Barnhart said there is some interest in continuing its operation.

Train Station Project

Mr. Barnhart said Black Rock Realty has put in foundations for its first building. It has put steel on hold and has construction plans in place. He said the area is zoned for office/service/retail. The developer is proposing a 4-story residential building on Ash Creek in the overlay zone.

Other Business

Mr. Penczer said the Rotary Club is co-sponsoring a business ethics program on January 17th at the Fairfield University Book Store. First Selectman Tetreau and Fr. VanArx will be presenting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

The next meeting will be on February 9, 2012.

Respectfully submitted:

Gretchen Goethner