

Town of Fairfield

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

April 12, 2012

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

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

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

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m.

Distributions: CDBG Entitlement Funding Chart, FFY2002-2012; Budget Request, Community and Economic Development Department

Minutes:

The minutes of March 8, 2012 were approved.

Marketing Fairfield

Mr. Barnhart said that he has received an edited copy of the marketing video which he will distribute to commission members for review & comment. Mr. Barnhart stated that he is working on developing an RFP for an updated EDC website.

Business Workshop

Mr. Barnhart said the workshop co-sponsored with UI was very successful. Participants learned the benefits offered through the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund. He said Fairfield businesses are leading in the effort to invest in energy saving modifications. He suggested some way be found to recognize businesses participating in the program, perhaps with publicity and decals for their operations. Mr. Barnhart said the town has taken advantage of the program by redoing some of the lighting on the Post Road.

Fairfield Center

Mr. Barnhart said he had attended a Complete Streets Symposium recently. He is expecting to hear within a month if Fairfield receives a planning grant from the Tri-state Transportation Foundation to be applied to investigating ways to improve the appearance and function of the central business area.

The Fairfield History Museum is applying for a grant from the Connecticut Historic Trust to enable it to investigate ways to connect its facility with the commercial downtown.

First Selectman Tetreau would like to have a downtown festival event, but it is impractical to try to plan a major program for the fall. Mr. Barnhart said there is interest in the business community for a Restaurant Week later this year.

Neighborhood Assistance Act

Mr. Barnhart said he is soliciting applications from non-profit groups who wish to participate in this program. No town funds are involved, but this provides a method to get charitable gifts from businesses to these organizations. Applications are due by April 26, 2012.

Other Business

Mr. Barnhart said that he had been part of a panel at a workshop sponsored by Construction Institute. He said construction activity continues to show strength and is helped by investment by the Town's universities.

Mr. Barnhart said he has been working with Russell Jinishian to find a new location for his art gallery. He submitted a letter of support to the P & Z for a lease of the Fairfield County Bank building on Bronson Road.

A reapplication is being made on behalf of the Sasco Hill building at the corner of the Post Road. The developers have purchased an adjoining property in order to accommodate more parking and a somewhat larger building. The neighbors support this application. The facility is expected to have retail on the first floor and office space above.

Mr. Penczer said there is an effort to form a new arts commission. A major concern is the future of the Community Theater. Mr. Nadim suggested that the facility could have multiple uses, not be limited to the showing of movies. The building needs major repair to bring it up to code. Mr. Ogden asked what funds were needed to accomplish the renovation. Mr. Barnhart said a thorough analysis is needed.

Mr. Barnhart said the former LasVetas space has received a variance and the Greenhouse Grill space has a new tenant.

Mr. Barnhart said he is meeting with a prospective intern next week. If accepted, he hopes this person will reinstitute contacts between his office and local businesses and will help develop the plan for a Restaurant Week in the fall. Mr. LaSala suggested developing an app for Fairfield that would direct visitors and residents to attractions, could offer coupons to be used at businesses and would have a local map as well as other features. It may be possible to secure interns from the local universities to establish such an app. Mr. Peterson suggested a tie-in between the Museum and History Center and the plans for promoting downtown.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

The next meeting will be on April 12, 2012.

Respectfully submitted:

Gretchen Goethner