

Town of Fairfield

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

October 11, 2012

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting on October 11, 2012 at 8:00 a.m. in the Old Town Hall Conference Room.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development; Michael Tetreau, First Selectman; Ross Ogden; LaVonnie Hamler

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

Minutes:

The minutes of September 20, 2012 were approved.

Commission Goals

Mr. Penczer introduced Mr. Tetreau.

The commissioners discussed the need for planning for future development of the Post Road from Mill Plain Road to Southport. They would like to see a process similar to the one used to make plans for the Commerce Drive area. Other areas mentioned as considerations are the Kings Highway to Bridgeport corridor and the Black Rock traffic circle. These areas are gateways to the town. An emphasis should be on making these destinations pedestrian friendly. To this end, Mr. Silvestro, Dr. Nadim and Mr. Penczer mentioned Salem, MA, Arlington, VA, Arcadia, CA and Reston, VA as towns that have been successful in addressing the issues of pedestrian and bicycle traffic in their commercial areas. Dr. Nadim emphasized that economic development should go hand-in-hand with quality of life standards. Mr. LaSala recognized that a hurdle to the fulfillment of some of the desired changes is that the management of many roads and railroad bridges is out of the hands of local authorities.

Mr. LaSala stressed the need for electronic access to information about the town as being critical to its development. It needs to be thought of as a marketing tool for the community as well as a way for residents to access information about the town. Mr. Tetreau said this is an area that is under continuing review and work. His department is scouting the web for other examples of communities, which are using this tool effectively.

He mentioned the current survey of other towns being conducted by the Senior Center Board in order to make plans for to improve this facility and its programs.

All agreed on the need to:

- Develop a mission statement
- Visit and communicate with other boards and commissions
- Contact neighborhood organizations
- Establish communication with state agencies to plan for future improvements
- Survey existing businesses

Mr. Tetreau said Mr. Bowman of his office is working on the issue of sustainability when it involves development in town.

Mr. Tetreau said that the 375th anniversary of the founding of Fairfield takes place in 2013 and that planning for this celebration must begin now.

Mr. Peterson commented that all residents want services **and** lower taxes. He suggested surveying the stakeholders to see what kind of development residents will support (i.e. Stratfield and the use of the old market site). He expressed surprise that some RTM members opposed the recent application for a planning grant.

Mr. Tetreau said that the price of real estate in town is a detriment to some potential commercial development. He mentioned the continuing effort of his office to involve the resources of the local universities in the ongoing planning process.

Mr. Penczer said the town government has traditionally updated its master plan every 10 years and that this is overdue.

Dr. Nadim questioned Mr. Tetreau on the cuts to the library hours. Mr. Tetreau said all departments have to make sacrifices and that choices were made to support the Police and Fire Departments at existing levels. This required changes to the budgets of all other departments.

Mr. Tetreau and Mr. LaSala commented on the amount of volunteer activity and participation in this town.

Restaurant Week

Mr. Barnhart said Fairfield's first Restaurant Week is approaching. He distributed copies of some publicity material and the Passports that diners will receive. He has secured the participation of 34 restaurants. Each venue will offer prix fixe lunches and dinners. Support has come from Fairfield University, the Fairfield Museum and History Center, the Fairfield Theater Company, the Fairfield Public Library. Participating diners may use 'passport' to receive discounts at local retail outlets. Each diner will have a number to be entered in a drawing for a major prize. Media on board include WSHU, WICC, WEBE, and the Connecticut Post.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 8, 2012.

Respectfully submitted:

Gretchen Goethner