

Town of Fairfield
Office of Community & Economic Development
Minutes of Economic Development Commission Meeting
February 14, 2013

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting on February 14, 2013 at 8:00 a.m. in the Old Town Hall Conference Room.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Penczer, Chairman; Don Peterson; Maureen Abrahamson

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

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

MINUTES: Approval of the minutes of January 10, 2013 was postponed due to a lack of a quorum.

Post Office Redevelopment

Mr. Barnhart distributed a copy of a letter he wrote to the Zoning Board of Appeals in support of the application of 1262 Post Road LLC for a variance to reduce the number of parking spaces required and the required side property line setback. He said the appeal was rejected by 1 vote. He expects the developer to modify the proposal and to resubmit the application.

Fairfield Metro Center

Mr. Barnhart said Black Rock Realty held a public meeting to explain its proposal to erect a residential building on the property next to the train station. Mr. Peterson asked if this would fall under the stipulations of the Commerce Drive zone requiring a 10% affordable housing component. Mr. Barnhart said it would. He said there has been no application yet to the T P & Z.

Mr. Peterson said he had walked the trails in the area and asked if there are any plans for public parking to facilitate access to the area. Mr. Barnhart said the Department of Public Works might erect some signs, but nothing more is planned. He said the Bridgeport Regional Business Council has shown some interest in supporting the building of a pedestrian bridge to the area from Fox Street.

Mr. Barnhart said his department is pursuing state funding for some streetscape improvements in the Commerce Drive area.

Exide

Mr. Penczer distributed the copies of a draft letter to the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection on behalf of the EDC supporting the expeditious clean-up of Mill River, financed by Exide.

Ms. Abrahamson expressed concern that the town be protected from future civil actions regarding the Exide responsibility. Mr. Peterson said he had some concern that the contractors hired for the remedial action project would follow the specifications as outlined by the DEEP.

Mr. Barnhart said all involved must meet the goals of the accepted plan. He will circulate the draft letter to the whole Commission for comment.

CEDAS Membership

Mr. Barnhart said he is on the board of the Connecticut Economic Development Association of the State (CEDAS). They have a monthly webinar series that might be of interest to Commissioners. There is a special membership category for EDCs. He will enroll the Commissioners.

Storm Sandy

Mr. Barnhart said the town and Operation Hope had been awarded a Robin Hood grant, which will help with the Food Bank, the Community Kitchen and the hiring of a part-time case manager. This will bolster the town's assistance programs to those affected by the storm. Mr. Barnhart said his office is sending out a letter to elderly residents of Fairfield to ask if they are in need of assistance.

Other Business

Mr. Penczer said that the Depression-era mural that had been in the Post Road Post Office has been restored and relocated to the 2nd floor conference room of Independence Hall. He said that the newly formed Arts Advisory Council had been instrumental in this placement. The AAC will be helping to plan the town's 375th anniversary for 2014.

Mr. Barnhart said the Greater Fairfield Board of Realtors is launching a program to enlist retailers and restaurants to participate in a discount program for active military personnel.

Mr. Penczer said he had recently toured the Aquaculture High School located in Bridgeport. He commended the institution and the opportunity it offers to students in surrounding communities.

Mr. Barnhart said he had not submitted a letter to the TP & Z regarding the Osprey Landing development (185 Thorpe Street). He asked if the Commissioners wished to suggest the inclusion of some affordable housing units as a trade-off for additional density. He will poll the Commissioners on this question.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2013.

Respectfully submitted:

Gretchen Goethner