

Town of Fairfield
Office of Community & Economic Development
Minutes of the Economic Development Commission Meeting
August 1, 2013

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting on August 1, 2013 at 8:00 a.m. in the Old Town Hall Conference Room.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development; Jackie Kaufman, New Country Lexus; Ross Ogden; Beverly Balaz, Fairfield Chamber of Commerce

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

Minutes: The minutes of the meetings of May 16, 2013 and June 13, 2013 were approved as amended.

80-90 Kings Highway Cut-Off

Ms. Kaufman presented the proposal of New Country Lexus to renovate the property at 80-90 Kings Highway Cut-Off. The plan would incorporate the former Fairfield Diner property with the existing service facility. The expansion will create 12 new jobs and increase the tax basis significantly. Ms. Kaufman said a light increase in traffic from the facility could be expected. She noted that the plan calls for a reduction on the number of curb cuts, however. Ms. Abrahamson asked if there would be 'green features' incorporated in the new building. Ms. Kaufman said rain gardens were the only additions currently planned. Mr. LaSala asked if there was feedback from neighbors. Ms. Kaufman said there was support from the commercial owners in the area.

Mr. Penczer asked for a motion of support for the application. Six members approved. Mr. Nadim opposed the motion.

Fairfield Sidewalk Sale Event, July 27, 2013

Mr. Barnhart said the day was very successful with 75 vendors participating. There was live music and other activities. He said there were limited funds to stage the event. Total cost to the Town was about \$1200. The music was donated. A survey of business participants showed great satisfaction with the day and an interest in participating again next year.

Ms. Balaz offered congratulations to Mr. Barnhart on the success of the event. She said the Chamber is considering a Holiday Stroll event and is looking into other ways to enhance the business climate downtown.

Business Accelerator

Mr. Barnhart said that Kleban has set aside space on the 2nd Floor of the Fairfield Center Building for a business incubator being developed jointly by the town, Fairfield University and Kleban Properties. The goal is to assist budding entrepreneurs in starting a business. Accepted applicants will be provided free office space for six months in addition to a suite of discounted services. Applications are currently being accepted for fall admission. The Town and its partners are actively seeking investors and program sponsors.

Commerce Drive Pedestrian/Streetscape Enhancement

Mr. Barnhart said there was a public hearing on the proposal to enhance the streetscape on Kings Highway between Chambers Street and Brentwood Avenue. More than thirty people attended and expressed interest in seeing the project proceed. The next steps involve action from the First Selectman's office, the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance and the RTM. Part of the work would connect the Kings Highway to the Train Station. Several commissioners questioned the number of pedestrians who would use the improved walkways. Mr. Barnhart said there is existing pedestrian traffic and that something will have to be done to improve the safety of the area. It is a question of how much of the cost will come from the local government and how much from state and federal funds. Mr. LaSala suggested making future developers make the improvements as they relate to their properties. Mr. Barnhart said it was essential to first have a plan/design. The grant would enable this and give the town some leverage in the matter.

Street Enhancement/ Post Road

Mr. Barnhart said the town has received a grant to do a field survey and provide enhancements for the south side of the Post Road from Mill Plain Road to Sasco Hill Road.

“Create Here Now” Partnership

Mr. Barnhart said that the State had received a grant to enhance local place-making. The State was looking to partner with towns such as Fairfield to leverage those funds on projects that would celebrate and enhance the unique qualities of each community. Mr. Barnhart indicated that he had mentioned the Community Theater, but is seeking other suggestions as well.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

The next meeting is September 5, 2013 at 8:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Gretchen Goethner

