

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

January 7, 2021

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting via teleconference on Thursday, January 7, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin Lesko; Don Peterson; Steve Rosato; Greg Minsky; Alethe Fatherley; and Rishi Narand

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jon Slavin

ALSO PRESENT: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development; Daphne Dixon, LiveGreen CT; Beverly Balaz, Fairfield Chamber of Commerce

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m.

Minutes of December 3, 2020 Meeting

Mr. Peterson made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2020 meeting. Mr. Minsky seconded the motion. The minutes of December 3, 2020 were approved unanimously.

Update on EV Readiness, Daphne Dixon

Ms. Dixon outlined steps taken by the state and LiveGreen CT to promote the use of electric vehicles in Connecticut. The goal is to recognize the role of transportation sources in reducing harmful emissions in the state and to encourage businesses and residents to reduce their major input in the production of harmful greenhouse gasses. Mr. Barnhart will provide the commissioners a link to the latest LiveGreen study. Ms. Dixon mentioned that LiveGreen produced an EV Readiness tool kit that has been used by many communities in the state to guide the development of their programs. Fairfield is the first town in the state to designate parking spaces exclusively for EV's. Ms. Dixon asked that the Fairfield EDC consider appointing a member to the Fairfield EV Readiness team.

Election of Officers

Mr. Peterson nominated Mr. Lesko as chair, seconded by Mr. Minsky. Mr. Peterson was nominated as vice-chair by Mr. Lesko, seconded by Mr. Rosato. The candidates were approved unanimously.

2020 Year End Review

Mr. Barnhart reiterated that the mission of the EDC is to stimulate economic development in Fairfield. He noted the highly educated workforce, the presence of two universities, and transportation access to town as major assets.

This year's economic progress has been dominated by the Corvid-19 virus and its implications. The department has helped facilitate expediting permits to enable some businesses to continue to operate under state and local guidelines. It has also assisted in the distribution of grants from HUD and the state to qualifying businesses. To date, 67 grants have been awarded with the retention of 124 jobs and the addition of 14 new ones.

Commercial building and business formation have declined though Fairfield is doing well compared with neighboring localities. The emphasis going forward will be on redevelopment and adaptive uses of property.

Several noteworthy projects have been approved, including The Crossings at Fairfield Metro Center for a mixed-use development. Ground breaking is expected in the spring of 2021. Additionally, the former Fairfield Lumber Yard site at 185 Thorpe Street was approved for a 158 unit, age-restricted residential development. A spring 2021 construction date is anticipated. Mr. Barnhart also reported that The Anchorage at 333 Unquowa Road should be ready for occupancy in the 2nd quarter of 2021.

Mr. Barnhart also reported on plans for streetscape and pedestrian improvements in the Stratfield and Southport neighborhoods. Mr. Barnhart also noted that his office had secured a grant toward the cost of replacing a section of the sewer main on the eastern side of town.

Mr. Barnhart reported on two new business openings: a chocolate shop in Greenfield Hill and a new food venue, the Reef Shack, at the former 7-11 convenience store location on Reef Road.

Other Business

Ms. Balaz provided an update on the Fairfield Community eGift Card Program. She noted that sale of these cards has exceeded expectations. To date, \$42,000 has been invested in this effort to support local businesses. The program will be active throughout the year.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 4, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner