

Town of Fairfield

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

August 12, 2021

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a special meeting via teleconference on Thursday, August 12, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin Lesko; Don Peterson; John Slavin; Justin Beck; Ken Hochhauser

MEMBERS ABSENT: Alethe Fatherley; Steve Rosato

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

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

Minutes: The minutes of June 3, 2021 were approved unanimously.

Update on Covid-19 Response and Reopening Plan

Mr. Barnhart said that current State and CDC recommendations are for mask wearing and social distancing to be observed indoors. He sees no change coming from the Fairfield administration. The vaccination statistics for the Town are good.

Mr. Barnhart noted that he has one new application for a COVID Small Business Assistance Grant, but that he is still awaiting additional information as it is incomplete. To date, 80 Fairfield small businesses have been assisted through this program.

Status Report on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Mr. Barnhart reported on a recent survey of local restaurant business owners. The survey found that 73% of respondents indicated that outdoor dining was either very helpful (64%) or somewhat helpful (9%) to the survival of their business during the pandemic. Many are interested in continuing the arrangement after the current regulations lapse early next year. Survey respondents also indicated support for changes to zoning regulations to decrease the amount of parking required for outdoor dining areas. Mr. Barnhart said that the EDC might want to consider proposing a text amendment relative to outdoor dining and parking.

Economic Development Priorities/Plan of Conservation & Development

Mr. Barnhart reported on the current plan to allocate federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. He noted that the plan proposes to allocate some funds toward an update to the Town's Plan of Conservation & Development and its Zoning Regulations, the latter of which hasn't been updated in more than three decades. He noted that both are important in terms of guiding new development activities in Town. Mr. Barnhart also discussed other priorities including upgrades to sidewalks, drainage systems and other infrastructure that will benefit businesses in town. Mr. Lesko asked about projects to address flooding, and Mr. Barnhart noted that the current plan includes monies for the Rooster River flood remediation project as well as to install green infrastructure downtown to improve drainage and resiliency to storm events. Town Boards are expected to consider the plan formally at their meetings in September.

Update on Development Sites/Pending Applications

The public hearing on the proposed Chick-fil-A at 750 Post Road was not concluded and was continued to the September meeting.

The developers of a proposed "PizzaCo" Restaurant at 801 Post Road have re-filed a revised application. The EDC had submitted a letter of support for the initial application, which was withdrawn.

Mr. Barnhart reported that Blackrock Realty has decided to entertain offers for their property at 21 Black Rock Turnpike and approved mixed use development plans (The Crossings at Fairfield Metro Center), which included 357 residential units and a 116-key hotel plus ancillary office and retail space.

The property at 81 Black Rock Turnpike (Reiner Estate) is under contract. The TPZ had considered a development proposal under its informal pre-application process in June.

The meeting adjourned at 9:28 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner