

**Economic Development Commission
Regular Virtual Meeting Minutes
December 7, 2020**

Present:

Joe Mirra, Chair
Mark Gingras, Vice-Chair
Hank Baum, Commissioner
Patricia Cymbala, Commissioner
Gary Fappiano, Commissioner
Jim Wolfe, Commissioner
Anthony Bracale, Alternate/Voting Member
Rob Fritz, Alternate

Absent:

Rosemarie Preneta, Commissioner

Others Present:

Tim Ryan, Economic Development Specialist
Lynn Wolff, Secretary
Kathy Lilley, Exec. Dir., WCI

Chair Joe Mirra called the regular virtual meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 6:33 p.m. and asked Alternate Bracale to serve as voting member.

1. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Chair Mirra led the EDC in the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. **Discussion and Possible Action on Special Meeting Minutes dated November 2, 2020** – Jim Wolfe made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted; Mark Gingras seconded the motion. By a unanimous vote, the motion carried.
3. **Review of monthly Expenditure Report** – No questions on the October report.
4. **Committee remarks**
 - **Marketing**
 - **Update on November 30 meeting** – Mark Gingras told the EDC that this Committee has had 4 meetings in the last month and briefed the Commission about these meetings with the Quinnipiac University students and their Professor. The Student Marketing Teams are working on reviewing the EDC section of the Town's website; how to attract

businesses to Wallingford; the possibility of message re-branding; a social media promotional strategy; and strategies on how to implement the marketing campaign. Again, the Committee remarked on what a great group these Quinnipiac University students are. They are working hard, along with their Professor, to develop this marketing plan. A meeting with Mayor Dickinson is planned in order to brief him on what has been accomplished thus far and what is planned. Tim Ryan agreed saying that there has been a mountain of work for this Committee to process, including working on weekends, and he thanked the Committee for all it has done. We will be refining a few more things before beginning the campaign. He also reminded the EDC that these students are being compensated at our insistence (\$250 every 2 months/student) so that they recognize that we have specific expectations. Rob Fritz commented that their social media skills are strong, a definite asset to this campaign. Tim added that the students have been instructed to focus on reaching businesses interested in Class A Office Space, which has a high vacancy rate in Wallingford. Gary Fappiano commented that he was interviewed by the students a few times--they're very good and professional.

➤ **Next meeting:** Tentatively set for January 4 at 8 a.m.

- **P&Z Liaison**

➤ **Update on committee activities** – Hank Baum said the Planning & Zoning Liaison (PZL) Committee will meet on December 10. Tim Ryan added that the Planning & Zoning Commission will meet next week; he knows of several items on their agenda that seem to have support: the issue of outdoor dining on private property (we are trying to rework the wording of the regulations to support a continuation of this); allowing food trucks at wineries (which has been done for the past seven months with great success and no issues), and discussing the draft zoning regulation text concerning the IX and I-5 Zones. The EDC has been in support of expanding the uses in the I-5 Zone, while being mindful of the watershed, and reducing the open space requirement to 40% (something Jim Wolfe proposed in November of 2016).

➤ **Next meeting:** December 10 virtual meeting at 12 noon..

- **Retention/Incentives**

➤ **Report on October 29 meeting** – Gary Fappiano said the Committee met on November 24 to talk about a continuation of the tax incentive agreement for the IHZ. This goes before the Town Council on December 8. The work on exit interviews has been suspended for now.

➤ **Next meeting:** None set.

79 **5. Chair's remarks** – Joe Mirra said he will forgo his remarks because most will be covered by Tim Ryan
80 in his staff report. He did ask that the EDC attend some of the virtual meetings as discussed.

81 **6. Staff report/regional matters – November report** – Tim reviewed this staff report (*copy attached*) and
82 the following items were noted:

- 83 ➤ The Town is still talking about how to reduce excessive train noise at railroad crossings and
84 have a meeting scheduled for Wednesday with the Mayor.

85 Recording was started,

- 86 ➤ Wallingford has been awarded a STEAP grant for \$128,205 to aid in the improvements planned
87 for the former Brother's Restaurant parking lot.
- 88 ➤ The December issue of *Wallingford Magazine* "From the Desk of Joe" column will address the
89 need for additional parking in our lower Town Center in support of completing the parking
90 improvements on the former Brother's property. This project supports plans to stimulate the
91 TOD area. Joe Mirra said he knows that some people are in favor of making that into a park but
92 the Town needs to enhance parking for the TOD. Also, there are several parks within a short
93 distance of the historic railroad station already. Tim agreed saying that if we increase parking,
94 attracting development in that area our Town Center will be compromised due to the need for
95 higher density development that drives financial feasibility.
- 96 ➤ A holiday store, selling a variety of items including Wallingford-branded merchandise, has
97 opened at HUBCAP and will be open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays until Christmas.
- 98 ➤ The \$50 million small business grant program from DECD was oversubscribed within one week
99 receiving \$90 million in grant requests.
- 100 ➤ The revised job description for the Program Planning/EDC secretary position will be discussed
101 at the December 8 Town Council meeting. Lynn has agreed to stay past her initial retirement
102 date to accommodate the hiring process.
- 103 ➤ The Amazon application for a facility at 5 Research Park is on the IWWC agenda for January
104 2021, at the developer's request.
- 105 ➤ Wellness centers are now allowed in the Town Center Zone thereby allowing Healing Hand
106 Chiropractic to go forward with expanding into the former Bank of America building. Tim said
107 credit goes to the PZC and Corporation Counsel Janis Small for engaging this application so
108 that this could happen.

109 Jim Wolfe asked what happened with a developer interested in the IX zone; Tim said the NY
110 developer was looking at a project in the IX Zone. However, after finding that his project would be
111 disallowed if the revised regulations passed, the developer pulled out of the project.

Hank Baum asked whether staff anticipated any problems with the Amazon application. Because it would be located within a watershed and the Water Division would rather see roofs than parking lots (in order to control runoff), Tim thinks the project will face some challenges.

Joe Mirra asked Tim to discuss two other Town Center projects. Tim said a proposal to enhance the Wallace Avenue parking lot with paving, lining and lighting is being proposed as well as improvements to the parking lot behind Simpson Court. Both will be discussed at the January Town Council meeting.

7. **Other community business** – Joe Mirra apologized for the problem with recording this meeting.

There being no further business, Mark Gingras made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m.; Patricia Cymbala seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn M. Wolff", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lynn M. Wolff, Secretary

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Staff Report

November 2020 Activities
Presented at December EDC meeting

Local Initiatives

- The Proton Beam Therapy Center being planned for the undeveloped 12 acre site on Northrop Road is progressing on schedule. The Mayor and staff spoke in support of the project at a recent virtual Certificate of Need hearing hosted by the CT Office of Health and Safety. Representatives from Proton International met with all Town departments that are directly involved in the project review process to coordinate the initiative. If the approval process stays on schedule, we anticipate construction to begin in July of 2021
- Montante Construction has submitted an application to IWWC for a 219,000 sf amazon warehouse at 5 Research Parkway, former BMS site. After a lengthy and detailed report from the applicant, the IWWC requested additional information and has scheduled further discussion at their next meeting on 12/2.

Creating Opportunities

- Staff met with the economic development specialist from Meriden to discuss their efforts to reduce excessive train noise at their at-grade crossings
- The PZC will discuss regulation changes that further the initiative of continuing some level of outdoor dining along with a limited allowance of food trucks at vineyards, breweries, and cideries in a post-COVID environment at their next meeting on 12/14

Marketing

- The digital marketing initiative program is going full steam ahead with measured progress at our bi-weekly meetings. We're on schedule to have a soft launch of our strategic digital marketing program in place before years end
- The December edition of Wallingford Magazine will feature a "From the Desk of Joe" column addressing the need for additional parking in our lower Town Center in support of completing parking improvements on the formers Brother's property

Trade Shows

- None scheduled

Update on Town Center

- Azteca Bakery has opened at 12 South Colony St
- A new tenant has been secured but not disclosed at the former location of DH Too at the corner of Center and North Orchard Street
- A holiday store is open at Hubcap on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from now until Christmas. Ten craft vendors are selling a variety of items along with Wallingford branded merchandise

Miscellaneous

- The Mayor, EDC Chair, and staff toured the new amazon facility on South Cherry St. amazon representatives were appreciative of the Town's support of this development project. amazon delivers 30,000 packages per day from this "last mile" facility and volume will increase to 40,000 packages per day during peak periods
- DECD's \$50 million small business grant program was oversubscribed within one week having received \$90 million in grant requests
- The Program Planning Secretary's position will be posted soon. Lynn Wolff will be retiring in January
- Staff met with a local commercial property owner to review unusually high vacancy rates in their industrial and office space inventory

In the News

- *Area towns awarded state grants for capital projects...* RJ, 11/10. We received a STEAP (Small Town Economic Assistance Program) grant in the amount of \$128,205 to aid in the improvements planned for the North Cherry Street parking lot

- *Police announce new community impact unit...*RJ, 11/10. This unit has been formed to address smaller community related issues such as noise, blight, parking enforcement, and other quality of life issues
- *Officials review impact of Amazon facility...*RJ, 11/12. IWWC reviewed an application for a 219,000 SF warehouse facility on the former BMS site at 5 Research Parkway. The application was tabled
- *Wallingford man pushing for park, not parking lot...*RJ, 11/13. A group is opposed to the expansion of municipal parking on North Cherry Street
- *Cancer therapy center set for public hearing...*RJ, 11/14. Proton International is working through the Certificate of Need process with the state Office of Health and Strategy. Plans to build this \$72 million facility are on schedule
- *Light show kicks off season...*RJ, 11/14. The Oakdale is featuring the Magic of Lights car driving tour at their facility
- *PZC changes regs to allow wellness center...*RJ, 11/15. The former Bank of America building at 100 Center Street will be the future home of Healing Hand Chiropractic
- *More than 18,000 apply for small-biz pandemic-relief grants...*HBJ, 11/25. The \$50 million grant pool was oversubscribed by almost double within one week
- *A popular Center Street eatery has a couple of new owners...*RJ, 11/16. Center Street Luncheonette is now owned and operated by Biranna and Diego Jadan
- *Underground music store pops up in new, bigger location in Wallingford...*RJ, 11/26. Redscroll Records moved to a new location at 69 South Turnpike Road

New & Expanding Businesses

- No report

Results of EDC Marketing Activities

Advertising	0
Brokers/Site Consultants	3
Direct Contact	3
State/CERC/Chamber/REX	2
Trade Shows	0
Business Assistance	<u>0</u>
Total	8

Respectfully,

Tim Ryan