

Town of Fairfield

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

October 8, 2020

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting via teleconference on Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

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

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 8:31 a.m.

Minutes: The minutes of September 3, 2020 were approved unanimously.

Update on COVID-19: Response and Reopening Plan

Mr. Barnhart said that the State and Town are moving forward with Phase 3 of the reopening plan. Restaurants can increase indoor seating capacity to 75%, though they must still maintain 6' of separation between tables. Mr. Barnhart is continuing to work with small businesses in town to address their issues and concerns. Mr. Barnhart reported on the COVID Small Business Assistance Grant Program. The program has approved grants totaling more than \$195K to 54 businesses to date. The Town still has roughly \$55K left to disburse and is still accepting applications. Mr. Lesko suggested that post-pandemic, the Town should re-examine its parking and outdoor dining regulations based on this experience.

Stratfield Center & Southport Pedestrian Improvement Projects

Mr. Barnhart said that the Town will host a public meeting virtually on October 19, 2020 regarding the Stratfield pedestrian and streetscape improvement project. The project is being partially funded by a \$650K State grant, and is intended to enhance pedestrian safety and connectivity in the Stratfield business district.

Mr. Barnhart also reported that the Town will hold a virtual public informational meeting on October 22, 2020 to discuss proposed pedestrian improvements along sections of the Post Road in Southport. The goal of this project is also to improve pedestrian safety and

to connect residential and commercial areas in the Southport area of Town. Mr. Barnhart will provide Commissioners with call-in information for both meetings.

Experience Fairfield Website Re-Launch

Mr. Barnhart reported on the Town's new Experience Fairfield website, which re-launched earlier this year. To help promote and build awareness of the new site, the Town is sponsoring a family scavenger hunt as a way for families with small children to learn about Fairfield. The first 25 respondents with correct answers to the riddles will win \$25 gift cards to local businesses.

Buy Local Community Gift Card Program

The Town is partnering with the Fairfield Chamber of Commerce to launch a new Fairfield Buy Local Community Gift Card program to help support local businesses. Mr. Barnhart explained that the gift cards, which are backed by Master Card, may only be redeemed at participating Fairfield businesses, so it is a great way to keep spending local. The First Selectwoman will hold a press conference later this month to formally announce the program to the community.

Update on Key Development Sites

Mr. Barnhart provided brief updates on the following development sites:

- The Kohl's property is being leased to Floor & Décor and Aldi's.
- The Joe's American site has been purchased and is most likely to remain as a restaurant(s) in the near term.
- The former gas station at the corner of the Post Road and South Benson, was recently purchased, and a restaurant is considering leasing that location.
- Mr. Barnhart has met with the broker and has received inquiries regarding the National Amusement property (Cinemas) next to BJ's.
- The public hearing regarding a proposed 40-unit set aside (8-30g) development at 131 Beach Road has been continued.
- Trademark II (Alto) has begun lease up and will be ready for occupancy by the end of 2020.
- The developer of Thorpe Street is finalizing construction plans and financing for a 158-unit age-restricted independent living project. Work is expected to begin in spring 2021.

Other Business

Mr. Barnhart said that in lieu of a traditional Restaurant Week this year, the Town will be sponsoring and promoting “Fairfield Eats” from October 19 to November 1, and encouraging everyone to patronize local restaurants.

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 8:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner