

Town of Fairfield

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

December 3, 2020

The Economic Development Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting via teleconference on Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin Lesko; Don Peterson; Steve Rosato; John Slavin; Alethe Fatherley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Greg Minsky, Rishi Narang

ALSO PRESENT: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development; Matt Fulda, Patrick Carleton, Metrocog

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m.

Minutes

Mr. Peterson moved the approval of the November 5, 2020 minutes. Mr. Slavin seconded the motion. The minutes of November 5, 2020 were approved unanimously.

Update on COVID-19: Response and Reopening Plan

Mr. Barnhart said his department has been distributing funds from the Small Business Assistance Program. To date, 65 applications have been approved and \$241,000 in grants has been awarded. The town has received an additional amount of \$300,000 from HUD. A grant of \$10,000 has been received from UI to be used to assist businesses in procuring PPE supplies and other material relevant to the prevention of COVID 19.

Presentation on Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Mr. Fulda and Mr. Carleton spoke about the development of a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Metrocog is the regional planning agency and, among other things, coordinates transportation funding for the region. The CEDS is necessary to qualify for certain types of federal funding for regional economic development (infrastructure) projects. Metrocog has retained a consultant to assist in the preparation of the CEDs. They are looking to engage and work with stakeholders to analyze existing economic conditions and opportunities and to identify and prioritize goals.

The current plan is to finish the project by the end of June, 2021 though they may apply for an extension if it is necessary. Six communities are included in the Metrocog region: Bridgeport, Fairfield, Easton, Trumbull, Monroe and Stratford. Mr. Fulda said the local higher educational institutions (SHU, FU, UB, Housatonic CC) would be included in the study as they can provide workforce development. Mr. Lesko suggested trade schools in the area be included. Metrocog will conduct a number of surveys with the goal of developing plans that secure buy-ins from the public.

Holiday Promotions

Mr. Barnhart said that the response to the 8th annual Holiday Stroll and Small Business Saturday had been positive.

Ms. Balaz provided an update on the Fairfield Community e-gift card program. Her goal is to sell \$10,000 worth of gift cards by the end of December. So far, 65 businesses have agreed to participate in the program. She emphasized that this is a year- round promotion.

Update on Key Development Sites

Mr. Barnhart said that building permits for commercial projects is 1/3 of what it was last year. Applications in the works include a new hockey arena at SHU; the Metro Center development; and the Thorpe Street elderly housing project. A decision on the 131 Beach Road property is expected later this month.

Other Business

Mr. Barnhart presented a proposed 2021 meeting schedule for the Commission. Mr. Slavin moved that it be approved. Mr. Rosato seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Barnhart said he would submit the proposed schedule to the town clerk.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 7, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner