

ENFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES

Thursday, April 15, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Turner called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Roll Call

Chairman Turner took the roll and present were Commissioners Gretchen Pfeifer-Hall, Kelly Davis, Richard Szewczak, Kelly Hemmeler, Phillip Kober, Marie Pynzar, Richard Stroiney and Mary Ann Turner. Absent were Commissioners Kiran Majmudar and Marilyn Cressotti.

Also present were Laurie Whitten, Director of Development Services and Elizabeth Bouley, Recording Secretary.

Motion: Commissioner Stroiney made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Pynzar, to move the Public Comment to before new business.

The motion passed with an 8-0-0 vote.

Votes: 8-0-0

Approval of Minutes

a. March 18, 2021 – Regular Meeting

Motion: Commissioner Pynzar made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Stroiney, to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting as amended.

Commissioner Kober stated that Nelson Tereso's name needs to be corrected in the minutes.

The motion passed with an 8-0-0 vote.

Votes: 8-0-0

Chairman Turner stated that Nelson Tereso had a death in the family and would not be at the meeting tonight.

Report From Development Services

Ms. Whitten stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) approved a farmer's market in an industrial development. She explained that it has to be a farmer's market and not a flea market, and described some of the items that will be available.

Chairman Turner asked if this will be in competition with the town green farmer's market. Ms. Whitten stated that it was supposed to be a winter farmer's market but the PZC decided it should not be limited in this way.

Commissioner Szewczak stated that the PZC wanted it to be more retail and not tied into the agricultural uses. He went on to state that it is in an Industrial zone and does not need time constraints since it is retail.

Chairman Turner stated that she does not know why they would make it a farmer's market when they already have a farmer's market. Commissioner Szewczak stated that this would be more geared toward selling a product rather than a meeting place in the center of town. He stated that the majority of products will be agricultural and it requires a Special Permit so applicants will need to come before the PZC for approval.

Ms. Whitten stated that the Town Council has to create a TIF Advisory Committee with one member from the EDC, the Conservation Commission and the PZC. Chairman Turner stated that she tried to find the TIF on the website and was unsuccessful. Commissioner Stroiney asked how often the TIF Advisory Committee meets, to which Ms. Whitten replied that she does not know but it will not be a regular meeting. Commissioner Kober asked if there is a deadline to decide, to which Ms. Whitten replied that it is May 3. Chairman Turner pointed out that there is not another EDC meeting before then so they have to decide tonight.

Ms. Whitten stated that the resolution explains the number changes and how the TIF will be increasing.

Chairman Turner asked if Namdar has access to those dollars, to which Ms. Whitten replied that they have the ability to request access just like anybody else, but they have not. Ms. Whitten stated that with the subdivision, all of the property values have gone up so they are going to realize even more gains.

Chairman Turner asked if they are coming back in for another assessment, to which Ms. Whitten replied that she does not think so.

Commissioner Pyznar stated that the grand list has gone up and asked if this plays into the TIF. Ms. Whitten stated that the grand list goes up if they start at a lower value.

Chairman Turner asked if the Commission should comment at the Town Council meeting regarding this. Ms. Whitten suggested that they make a positive statement for this if they would like to participate.

Chairman Turner asked if Commissioner Stroiney agreed to being the TIF Advisory Committee liaison, to which Commissioner Stroiney replied that he did.

Ms. Whitten stated that new Assistant Town Planner Georgianna Driver started this week, and went over some of her credentials.

Liaison Reports

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that they think the Assistant Town Planner will be a good fit, particularly given her GIS background. She stated that they also talked about the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), the tree manual and farmland preservation program. Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that they also discussed the rail to trail effort and wrote a letter of support for that. Chairman Turner asked where they get their money, to which Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall replied that they ask the Town Council and they typically do not get any. She stated that this is a local program for smaller farms, generally for 25 acres or less.

Commissioner Stroiney asked if the PZC has done all of the requests for outdoor dining. Commissioner Szewczak stated that they bend over backwards to help the restaurants and they will be seeing a lot more outdoor dining in town.

Commissioner Pyznar asked about the former Backyard Grille and whether a pub had bought the facility. Commissioner Szewczak stated that they did approve some modifications to the building about a year and a half ago but he does not remember it being a pub.

Commissioner Hemmeler stated that there is a \$3,000 budget for agriculture and conservation, which Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall replied was probably just for staffing.

Commissioner Hemmeler stated that the Town Council is working on the budget as well as getting a roofs and roads referendum.

Old Business

Adoption of EDC Bylaws

Chairman Turner stated that she did not see any more changes that need to be added. She stated that they can remove the part about most senior in tenure.

Commissioner Davis stated that they should change “each Vice Chair” to “the Vice Chair” since they only have one.

The Commission agreed that no other changes were needed.

Motion: Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kober, to accept the bylaws as amended.

The motion passed with an 8-0-0 vote.

Votes: 8-0-0

Chairman Turner stated that they can consider the bylaws completed.

TOD (Transit Oriented Development)

Ms. Whitten stated that they are trying to figure out how to change things up with the elimination of the casket building, so they will see where that goes.

Discussion Items

Chairman Turner stated that it would be good for everyone to attend the Best Practices in Balancing Land Use and Economic Development Webinar on April 28. She read a description of the webinar.

Chairman Turner stated that she would like the Commission to look at economic development and think about what their mission should be. She stated that Simsbury has a project evaluation and discussion guide, which helps an Economic Development Commission look at projects that may help the town.

Chairman Turner suggested they meet in person. Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that she does not see why they need to meet in person, to which Chairman Turner replied that if she does not want to meet in person she does not have to come. Commissioner Pyznar stated that the

Commission has evolved from an advisory board and she agrees that they need a mission statement and to define their purpose. Commissioner Stroiney agreed that it is important to define the mission.

Commissioner Turner stated that she will send some documents to the Commissioners and they should look them over and start thinking about mission statements. Ms. Whitten stated that she can send out information and then discuss it at a meeting rather than the Commissioners talking amongst themselves.

Ms. Whitten stated that if they are going to have a meeting it must be recorded. Chairman Turner asked if they can work in small groups, to which Ms. Whitten replied that they can. Discussion took place regarding how to put the mission statement subcommittee together.

Chairman Turner stated that the members who want to join the subcommittee are Commissioners Pyznar, Davis, Stroiney, Kober and herself.

Commissioner Szewczak stated that it cannot be a subcommittee meeting if there is a quorum. Chairman Turner stated that if there are two or more people they will post it. Ms. Whitten stated that they have to take minutes.

Chairman Turner asked if Commissioner Kober had a chance to look at the website. Commissioner Kober asked who manages the website, to which Ms. Whitten replied that Nelson Tereso does. Chairman Turner requested that this be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Public Comment

Frank Troiano addressed the Commission. He stated that they have been working on a project along the rail line and wanted to provide some information about the project to the Commission. He stated that there is an oil terminal located at 188 Moody Road and a pipeline that runs along that rail line. Mr. Troiano stated that they have been enhancing the terminal for a green energy project which is a biofuel facility. He explained that biofuel product will be brought in and blended with traditional home heating oil.

Mr. Troiano stated that the product cannot be trucked or pipelined and needs to be railed, which is the reason it is being put at this location. He stated that the rail line has been recently upgraded.

Mr. Troiano stated that they have received a blending grant through the USDA and they have support from Congressman Joe Courtney as well as Senators Blumenthal and Murphy. Mr. Troiano stated that biofuel is a clean burning and non-hazardous material that is non-flammable and non-explosive. He stated that it is a great opportunity for the area.

Mr. Troiano stated that they would be happy to work with the rail trail but to remove the line would be foolish in terms of economic opportunity. He stated that having an active line will enhance other businesses that could or will be there right now.

Chairman Turner asked if people are saying they want to remove the rail. Mr. Troiano stated that they are and he wanted to let the EDC know that the project is real.

Commissioner Pyznar asked where the rail will go, to which Mr. Troiano replied that it will go where it is now. He explained that they are not expanding, but rather are just enhancing the existing line.

Mr. Troiano left the meeting.

Ms. Whitten stated that there are other businesses interested in keeping the rail alive. Commissioner Szewczak asked how many times the rail has been used in the last 20 years. Ms. Whitten stated that it goes up to the fertilizer plant in East Windsor all the time. She stated that she does not know when it last came up to Enfield.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that she disagrees with the railroad needing to be reopened and stated that the rails to trails will have a positive economic development impact on the area.

Commissioner Hemmeler stated that rails to trails is a fun family activity and she would be in support of it. Chairman Turner asked why they would want to give up an economic area, to which Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall replied that it will cost millions to repair the bridge.

Chairman Turner stated that the DOT is already in favor of this and they already have a rail, so there is an opportunity for economic development.

Commissioner Szewczak asked if an entire facility would need to be built to store the biofuel. Chairman Turner asked if discussion on this will take place on Monday if the Town Council is in the process of doing something with this. Commissioner Hemmeler stated that she did not receive the agenda yet so cannot answer that.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that according to Representative Hall's survey, over 70% of people were in favor of the rails to trails. Chairman Turner replied that a survey can be led. She went on to state that in the eastern part of Enfield is the last industrial park left, and there can still be a rails to trails there as they can have both.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that they are not going away from economic development but they are going toward something different. Discussion took place regarding whether this is a good location for a rail trail.

Mr. Troiano re-joined the meeting.

Commissioner Szewczak stated that they cannot control what somebody does on their land. He asked how often that rail has been used in the last twenty years. Mr. Troiano stated that this is a question for the DOT or the rail provider, but the rail line is functional.

Commissioner Davis stated that it is too soon for the Town Council to be making a referendum since the majority of people do not have all of the facts.

Commissioner Stroiney stated that the rail has not been used in the presidential section and Scantic Bridge area in the last twenty years.

Mr. Troiano stated that the Scantic Bridge has been rebuilt in the last couple of years and is solid. He stated that the crossings are already upgraded and the crossing of the Scantic is complete.

Commissioner Pyznar asked how bringing diesel fuel on these trains will help Enfield economically. Mr. Troiano explained that the fuel is biodiesel. He stated that having a blended diesel fuel will help decrease greenhouse gas emissions. Mr. Troiano stated that the enhanced line will spur other developments in the area, which will increase the tax base.

Commissioner Pyznar asked if the biodiesel will be brought in and sold, to which Mr. Troiano replied that their supplier will be selling it. Commissioner Pyznar stated that she still does not see how the residents of Enfield are going to benefit financially from this. Mr. Troiano stated that the financial benefit will result from more businesses coming in with more jobs and more industry in an area that is designed for industrial.

Mr. Troiano stated that they can do a rail and a trail at the same time or do a trail somewhere else.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that a rail to trail is going to be much more beneficial to the community and is a more holistic approach that will bring in new young families, which will help the economy. She stated that the bridge is not up to snuff and will cost a lot of money to repair. Mr. Troiano stated that he was told by the rail provider and the DOT that the bridge is ready for use. He stated that this is not going to be a passenger line.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that biofuel is flammable and hazardous. Mr. Troiano stated that biodiesel coming in is 100% bio and does not become hazardous or flammable until it is mixed.

Mr. Troiano stated that transportation emissions are one of the biggest challenges, particularly because of the distribution limitations from pipelines. He stated that the senators he brought it to all endorsed it wholeheartedly as a unique opportunity to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Commissioner Szewczak asked how to make this safe. Mr. Troiano stated that they have already spoken with the EPA and DOT and meet all of the requirements and added that they are not a refinery.

Mr. Troiano stated that this is not a change of use but is an enhancement of an existing use.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that the rail to trail is not new and is something the community has desired for many years.

Commissioner Kober asked what the timetable is to hypothetically get this going. Mr. Troiano stated that it will be sometime in 2022. He stated that he wants everyone to understand this is a green program and is a great enhancement.

Commissioner Szewczak stated that he does not understand how this material is safe if it cannot be trucked. Mr. Troiano stated that the trucking can be done but not to the scale of what would be economically feasible. He stated that it needs to be railed over and brought to the site, and that there are many of these sites all over the country. Mr. Troiano stated that this initiative will provide clean diesel fuel for all and also take many diesel trucks off of the road. He stated that this site offers a unique and rare opportunity as the rail already exists along with the infrastructure that could allow for something like this.

Commissioner Pyznar asked what this will do to the property values of the homes that are located on this line. Mr. Troiano stated that they will work with the DOT to make it as convenient as possible. Chairman Turner stated that if you buy a house where a rail is located you can expect there to be noise. Commissioner Pyznar stated that the rail has been dormant for years. Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that the rail line has not been used in nearly 50 years and that a better use of this is a trail.

Commissioner Szewczak stated that there are no cross arms that exist currently on the roads and asked how that would work. Mr. Troiano stated that the rail provider will work with the DOT on getting those in place as well as whatever else is necessary.

Chairman Turner asked if anyone had a chance to come up with any ideas regarding the documents she sent. The Commission discussed the three biggest challenges Enfield faces today, the three biggest opportunities and the three most important priorities Enfield should focus on.

Adjournment

Commissioner Pyznar made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Szewczak, to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.