



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

## REGULAR MEETING

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*July 20, 2022 – 5 PM – Ludlow Room, Windsor Town Hall and via Zoom*

**PRESENT:** *Sharran Selig-Bennett, Randy Graff, Ojala Naeem, Tim Rice, Nathan Karnes and Al Loomer*

**ABSENT:** *Trevor Thorington, Jermika Cost, Jane Garibay, Steve Porcaro*

**STAFF PRESENT:** *Peter Souza, Patrick McMahon and Harrison Sawka*

**GUEST:** *N/A*

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Graff called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

### **2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No members of the public were present.

### **3. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

- a. **EDC's Role as TIF Advisory Committee** - The Town Council passed a TIF Policy at its June 6th meeting and it named the EDC as the TIF Advisory Committee. Town staff is looking at the establishment of a TIF District for Windsor Center and possibly for Wilson. The Policy does include a provision that a resident or business representative from the District be involved in the deliberations about the District. Town Manager Souza is the appointing authority and will determine who will be involved.

Karnes asked about the accumulation of TIF revenue and whether the Town Council could utilize the funds to offset something like a 3% increase. Souza stated that the District Master Plan would determine what percentage is captured so for example 50% could go to the general fund and 50% to the district. The Council would be able to determine how to utilize the 50% allocated to the district based on the plan. Graff mentioned that the EDC role is advisory and that the Council could follow the recommendations of the EDC or not.

Karnes asked about the location of a TIF in Wilson. McMahon stated that the Wilson census tract is south of 291. A potential district would include at least the commercial

district along Windsor Avenue from the town line to the Windsor Shopping Center and Spillane property.

Graff mentioned that that area would be under the purview of the Wilson Deerfield Advisory Committee.

Karnes mentioned the possibility of a TIF for the Stanadyne and Taylor Fenn properties.

Naeem asked if there would be a subcommittee of the EDC to handle TIF. Graff stated it would be the whole EDC. Souza stated that the individual would be appointed for the advisory sessions and participate in TIF related discussions but would not participate in non-TIF related matters.

Naeem asked what level of activity would be expected in the first year. McMahon mentioned two active redevelopment initiatives for Windsor Center Plaza with Greg Vaca and the Ardery site with Dr. Mohan Sachdev. Both parties received concept approval from the Planning and Zoning Commission and are in the process of developing final designs. Both projects are likely to go back to the PZC for final approvals in the Fall.

Graff asked whether we are looking at separate districts. McMahon said the boundary of the district would be along the commercial corridors of Poquonock Ave, Palisado Ave and Broad Street and extending over to Mechanic Street. McMahon stated that the district would include both the Windsor Center Plaza site and the Ardery site. Once the district is created, the town can entertain Credit Enhancement Agreements. The TIF Policy requires that any CEAs be for properties on the Town's Priority Redevelopment List and both the Ardery site and Windsor Center Plaza are on that list.

Karnes asked whether it is safe to have a larger district because CEAs are not as of right but they are negotiable. Souza answered in the affirmative. McMahon stated that the reason for the larger district is so that TIF revenue can be used for other enhancement projects in the downtown like façade improvements, small business assistance, streetscaping, public art, or other improvements included in the district master plan. Souza gave an example that apartment units generate about \$3,000-\$3,500 in taxes per unit. 60 units at \$3,500 would result in \$210,000 in value. Some of this would be captured. If the capture was 75%, then 25% would go into the general fund. So approximately \$150,000 would go to the district for projects or CEA. Souza mentioned that the capture could be 50% or 75% - depends on what is adopted in the Master Plan by the Council.

Graff asked whether the CEAs would be a separate item much like abatements and Souza answered in the affirmative. Graff asked about the reception of the Council to a broader district. Wilson and the Center are large districts but Graff stated he thought that would make sense. Rice asked what percentage are we talking about? McMahon said that the Tax Assessor was running the numbers based on the initial boundary that we are proposing. Souza said that if it was 1% he would be surprised. Graff mentioned

that it cannot be more than 10% of the area. Souza clarified that it cannot be more than 10% of the taxable real estate value in the community.

#### **4. ITEMS FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**

Graff said that since Adam Gutcheon is no longer at the Chamber we will need to find out who will represent them. McMahon mentioned that he invited the Chamber Board President, Steve Pocaro, to attend the meeting but that he was not available.

#### **5. ITEMS FROM COMMISSION**

Graff asked what was happening with Riverfront Recapture. Souza said they acquired 60 acres at the end of Meadow Road most of which is in Harford. They are seeking funding for a multi-use trail that will link to the Harford Boathouse and the East Barber Street boat launch. They need to install a bridge over Deckers Brook. They are creating a plan for the 60 acres as a park. Graff asked if the Town Council was on board with the plan. Souza said that the Council is supportive and that it committed \$50,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds as a local match for a grant application. Graff asked if the commercial development proposed is only in Hartford. Souza said yes mainly in Hartford. Selig-Bennett remarked that the plan is outstanding with a new inlet for paddleboarding and canoes.

Karnes inquired about the overall economic climate mentioning that Best Cleaners was providing a bonus for hires. Businesses are having difficulty finding employees. Karnes asked if there was something we could do to help employers? McMahon mentioned the successful job fair last year and that the Chamber of Commerce was in the process of developing a job portal on its website. The Chamber is in the process of changing its web provider so the job bank has not gone life. McMahon mentioned the signs in front of manufactures seeking hires. Manufacturing workforce will be a topic of our Fall business breakfast. It is important that we work with Capital Workforce Partners on this issue. McMahon mentioned that Amazon has started to hire for its facility on Kennedy Road. Staff assisted Amazon in finding locations to host job fairs. Rice asked about what was going on across from Amazon. Souza said that a medical supply logistics company would be leasing both buildings.

Graff asked whether there were any abatement requests in the pipeline. Souza said there were not but that the new development on Kennedy Road does fall within the Bradley Airport Development Zone.

#### **6. ITEMS FROM STAFF**

- a. The Town Council adopted the recommendations of the EDC to remove Roger Wolcott School and add Windsor Center Plaza to the Town's Priority Redevelopment Properties List.

- b. Windsor Worx operator is seeking funding from banks and CTNext to establish the business center in the Loomis owned Bank of America building at 208 Broad Street. The Town allocated \$165,000 in American Rescue Plan funds but required the operator to come up with \$110,000 in matching funds through any combination of donations, sponsorships, grants or financing. We expect interior work to commence sometime in the Fall.
- c. CIGNA will be investing \$386M in its data center on Griffin Road North. CIGNA is seeking state incentives related to sales tax exemptions on purchase of equipment. Under a state law, in order to qualify for the state incentives, the data center operator must secure a host community agreement with the municipality outlining any local incentives that would be provided. CIGNA agreed to pay Windsor the going rate on the personal property taxes and the Council approved the host community agreement.
- d. The Town Council approved the application for \$2M to the State under a new program called the Community Investment Fund for the development of the Wilson Gateway Park on the Redevelopment Parcel. Public Investment Communities and Alliance Districts are eligible for this new pool of funds that is \$875M over the course of 5 years. The first tranche is \$75M. The Council approved the use of \$500,000 in American Rescue Act Funds as a match. Grant award announcements should be in the Fall.
- e. A 750,000 s.f. logistic center will begin construction at Great Pond Village. Chewy is no longer going into the new building but the developer is going forward on spec. A groundbreaking is planned in August. Karnes asked about whether there was an abatement. Souza said there is not an abatement as the abatement was with Chewy.
- f. 105 Baker Hollow has a Letter of Intent but we do not yet know the user.
- g. Baker Hollow Roadway Improvement – the Town Council approved funding to complete the design of the roadway and utilities to Marshall Phelps. The plan is to complete the design by the end of the calendar year, bid over the winter and have construction in 2023. This will open up developable land and will be an inducement for new construction.
- h. The Harford announced that it would be relocating employees from its Windsor facility to its Hartford campus. The Hartford is exploring the sale of the building or finding lessees. We have significant office vacancies and McMahon stated that he would come back to the Commission to discuss strategies to fill vacant office space. Souza said that Class B and C office space could be challenging to fill and that we may see some get torn down or repurposed. Souza mentioned the possibility of repurposing the office space across from Northfield Drive. Karnes asked if Waste Management pulled out? Souza said they are leasing at the Hartford building. Karnes suggested that Windsor would get hurt on personal property on the grand list with office contractions. Souza said potentially so. Souza said that the office sector will be a challenge for everyone across the nation due to hybrid work.
- i. Souza mentioned the Fast Pitch Nation tournament bringing a couple of hundred teams to town. Souza said that two hotels have been approved by Planning and Zoning. A brewery has been approved and reconstruction work is under way at 1001 Day Hill Road. The soccer dome is seeking to finalize financing and the foundation is built.

## **7. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

**Motion:** Selig-Bennett moved to add the minutes of the March 8, 2022 meeting to the agenda. Rice seconded the motion. The addition of the March 8, 2022 minutes to the agenda was unanimously approved.

**Motion:** Selig-Bennett moved to accept the March 8, 2022 meeting minutes; Rice seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved as distributed with Loomer abstaining.

**Motion:** Selig-Bennett moved to accept the May 18, 2022 meeting minutes; Naeem seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved as distributed with Loomer abstaining.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Rice made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Loomer seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 PM.