



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

## REGULAR MEETING

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*November 16, 2022 – 5 PM – Ludlow Room, Windsor Town Hall and via Zoom*

**PRESENT:** *Randy Graff, Ojala Naeem, Nathan Karnes Tim Rice, Jermika Cost and Al Loomer*

**ABSENT:** *Sharran Selig-Bennett, Trevor Thorington, and Jane Garibay*

**STAFF PRESENT:** *Peter Souza, Patrick McMahon*

**GUEST:** *Jerome Smalley, CEO Blueprint Robotics, Mark Brown, CFO Blueprint Robotics, Martin Lettenmeier, COO Blueprint Robotics, Ryan Cawley, VP of Finance Blueprint Robotics, Dan Breen, JLL, Shawn McMahon, JLL, Julie Miller, JLL, Jubal Smith, JLL*

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

Chairman Graff called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM.

### **2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

### **3. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **a. Review Application for Assessment Abatement**

McMahon introduced our guests from Blueprint Logistics (Blueprint) and Jones, Lang, LaSalle (JLL). McMahon explained the role of the Economic Development Commission in relation to the town's assessment abatement policy as advisory to the Town Manager and Town Council. Blueprint submitted an application for a tax abatement which was distributed to the Commission. The goal for the meeting is to hear from the company and staff to determine whether the request for abatement is in keeping with the town's policy.

Jerry Smalley provided a power point presentation highlighting the company. Smalley stated that the company is headquartered in Baltimore and is working on establishing a production facility in the Northeast. Smalley spoke of various challenges in the construction industry including increasingly complex building and energy code requirements; levels of waste; and depth and quality of the construction workforce. Blueprint's value proposition is cost certainty, quality and speed of construction resonate as a value proposition. Blueprint's scope includes exterior walls, floors and roof; exterior sheathing; installation of exterior windows and doors; and building MEP and fire protection systems. Blueprint's technology is different than modular systems. Blueprint installs the projects components on the customer's foundation and completes the rough-in on the MEP systems for faster builds than traditional methods. All work is completed includes local jurisdiction inspections. Blueprint's customer base is related to

multi-family development. Smalley explained the benefits of Cross Laminated Timber (CLT). Blueprint can provide high performance exterior walls.

Blueprint is committed to environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives. Blueprint is a living wage employer – all workers make a minimum of \$23/hr. with benefits and employment diversity is a company tenet. Blueprint focuses on sustainability measures. Blueprint's Northeast facility will complete Mid-Atlantic to Northeast market coverage and provide access to Quebec and Ontario. The plant will incorporate CLT/mass timber construction and include solar energy and waste incinerator for heat/hot water. The Northeast plant will have mass timber fabrication capabilities, as well as CLT fabrication. The proposed location is off Day Hill Road and the building footprint would be 450,000 s.f. The Baltimore facility is 200,000 s.f. Blueprint has put together an A list for its design and construction team including ARUP, Binderholz, Windover Construction, Auros Group and Langan.

Blueprint would employ approximately 110-120 workers with average wages of approximately \$73,000 and benefits. The facility, which is targeting a production commencement date of 3Q2024, would be fully staffed by the end of 2025.

Expected capital investment would be approximately \$97.1M, inclusive of

- Land costs: \$15.5M
- Building, Improvements: \$43M
- Production/Distribution Equipment: \$38.6M

Utilizing Emsi™ multipliers, JLL estimated over ten years the project would have a \$3.4M fiscal impact on the state and \$4M on the local economy. The project would impact 31 indirect jobs and 44 induced jobs and have positive earnings impacts.

Mass timber is a product that is taking off in the market place and Windsor can be a center of such activity.

McMahon stated that as a manufacturing facility it is eligible under the abatement policy. There are a couple of schedules included in the policy. One for existing Windsor businesses and one for new businesses to the community. A new business looking to make an investment in real estate, exclusive of land and personal property, of between \$31-50M can qualify for a tax abatement of up to five years and 60%.

Blueprint requested that the town explore the possibility of two 5% upward adjustments for high quality design and sustainability measures such as solar and for wages exceeding median regional wages. Based on town staff review, the company would qualify for the potential 5% adjustment for sustainability measures but it may not qualify for the 5% adjustment for wages. Many, but not all, of the positions exceed median regional wages based on Department of Labor statistics.

Loomer asked who owns the property. Indus Realty owns the property. Blueprint would acquire 48 acres leaving Indus with a 14 acre site along Day Hill Road.

Graff asked if the lumber was all European lumber. Not all, but the lion's share is from Europe. Sheathing is US. Blueprint needs to purchase in 40 foot lengths. The forest

industry in Europe will produce those lengths but that is not currently the case in the US.

Karnes asked if the product for Baltimore comes by rail or the port. Generally, it comes to the port of Baltimore. The product would be transported to Windsor from Baltimore unless in the future product comes further north in shipping. Canadian forest product may catch up with this technology. Blueprint reduces waste by cutting to measure.

Loomer asked about transportation and impact to local traffic. Blueprint estimates 10 tractor trailers in and out each day which is minimal impact. Today, Blueprint does not use rail operations. Blueprint delivers product to job sites.

Karnes asked about the electrical needs at 7000 amps at 480 volts. Shawn McMahon said they are confirming with Eversource but there appears to be enough capacity in the road. There needs to be a determination on how to get the power to the site.

Smalley said they are looking at all types of clean energy solutions to allow them not to send any waste to a landfill. The objective is to get to as low as a carbon footprint as is possible.

Naeem asked about requirements for workforce training. Blueprint works with organizations in Baltimore for workforce training and expects to do so here if the site is chosen. In Baltimore, lowest entry positions are \$23/hr. with full benefits day one.

Manufacturing operations is quality control engineer, plant manager, and supervisors of the individual trades units.

The project would need planning and zoning approvals. Blueprint will make a locational decision before pursuing zoning approval. The site is under contract.

Graff said that of all the abatement requests he has reviewed, he believed it was a very good presentation with the power point. He said he supports hiring of veterans which Blueprint does.

Karnes said he likes the “walk the walk” that Blueprint is planning a mass timber building. The facility would be the largest mass timber building in the country at the time it is built. Karnes mentioned a multifamily project in New Haven is being constructed with mass timber. Some of the consultants Blueprint is planning to have involved in this project are involved in the New Haven project.

Graff mentioned information from the packet that there is stock ownership by employees at Blueprint which is a significant benefit. Multifamily can include college dormitory projects.

Souza stated that additional analytical work was necessary to review the requested adjustment for wages in excess or regional median wages.

Graff called for a motion to recommend this project for abatement to the Town Council at the level requested by the company, as well as the two adjustments for sustainability and wages should staff determine they qualify for those adjustments. Loomer motioned and Naeem seconded. The motioned carried unanimously 5-0. Graff noted that Rice was in favor of the project but needed to leave prior to the motion being made.

Souza discussed the next steps of working with the company on a draft assessment abatement agreement to bring to the Town Council at their first meeting in December. Traditionally, the item is then referred to the Finance Committee which is scheduling a meeting mid-December. It would then be brought back to the Council at the second December meeting or early January.

Loomer asked if the goal was to break ground in Q1 of 2023 and Smalley responded that they need to make a location decision quickly.

b. Annual Meeting Schedule for 2023

McMahon presented a calendar continuing the third Wednesday of every other month at 5 p.m. with the meetings being in-person, as well as the hybrid Zoom option.

Graff remarked that the schedule is regular meetings and special meeting could occur as needed.

Graff called for a motion to approve the meeting schedule. Naeem motioned, seconded by Loomer. Motioned passed unanimously. Naeem requested that calendar invites be sent out with all of the meeting dates.

McMahon mentioned the possibility of a special meeting in January to discuss the Windsor Center Plaza Redevelopment project. If that were to occur then that would substitute for the regular meeting in January.

**4. ITEMS FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**

McMahon mentioned that the Chamber hired Windsor resident Dr. William Clark as Interim Executive Director. McMahon mentioned one of First Town Downtown's fundraisers is the gift card program and that the gift card can be used at several different vendors in Windsor Center.

**5. ITEMS FROM COMMISSION**

Karnes had a question about the process for reviewing abatement requests. He understands that the meeting is an open meeting. He noted that the EDC had a presentation by the company and then in front of the company the EDC had discussion and voted. He suggested that the company could have given the presentation and then left with the decision communicated to them later. That would allow the EDC to have a freer conversation. Naeem asked about the possibility of going into executive session. Souza did not believe the level of conversation with the company would justify going into executive session. Perhaps as a courtesy, the company could be asked to make the presentation and then depart with staff informing the company of the decision. Loomer concurred with Karnes concern. Souza said we could respectfully ask that the company to depart but technically they could remain for the discussion if they desired. Souza said we could set that expectation with the company in advance of the meeting. One suggestion was to have the presentation as one agenda item and the vote later in the agenda as a separate item.

Graff mentioned that the January meeting would include election of officers.

## 6. ITEMS FROM STAFF

- a. McMahon thanked Commission members for attending the business breakfast. The attendance was 70 people to hear speaker, Paul Lavoie, Chief Manufacturing Officer for the State of CT who was very engaging.
- b. Souza mentioned that Ocean State Job Lot at the Windsor Shopping Center was ending its lease but that Big Lots would be taking the space. Subway has closed on Broad Street. Landlord has had some interest in the space. Jersey Mikes and Nardelli's are possible prospects for the space. Hairdresser on Fire is no longer occupying that space. The proprietor moved to Bloomfield and some of the stylists found jobs with other salons in town. There is still code improvement work taking place with the Taste of India. For the business incubator, Annisa Teich has met with Windsor Federal about possible financing. There is a match requirement of \$110,000 that could come from grants, sponsorships or financing. There is a hope that CTNext could provide some support but no commitments have been made and Naeem mentioned that they may be focused on more regional projects for strategic impact. Naeem said DECD has programs if Ms. Teich is looking at financing and suggested reaching out to Commissioner David Lehman before he steps down.
- c. Naeem asked about ARPA program funding. Souza said the small business and nonprofit grants were allocated and the Town Council is looking at other potential uses of the funds – either capital projects or human services.
- d. Graff asked about the Ardery site. McMahon said we have an application for the property that staff is reviewing. The goal would be to have it on the December agenda for scheduling a public hearing in January. They have not requested any incentives at this point.
- e. Day Hill Dome is expected to close on financing sometime in November.

## 7. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

**Motion:** Loomer moved to accept the September 21, 2022 meeting minutes; Naeem seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved as distributed.

## 8. ADJOURNMENT

Next meeting is scheduled for January 18<sup>th</sup>.

Loomer motioned to adjourn. Naeem seconded. Motion approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 PM.