



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

## REGULAR MEETING

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*July 19, 2023 – 5 PM – Ludlow Room, Windsor Town Hall and via Zoom*

**PRESENT:** *Randy Graff, Tim Rice, Sharran Selig-Bennett, Al Loomer, Trevor Thorington, Jermika Cost; and Nathan Karnes*

**ABSENT:**

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

**GUESTS:** *Ken Fredette, Andrew Surprise*

**NOTE:** *No actions were taken as the meeting was not properly noticed.*

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

Chairman Graff called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

### **2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

### **3. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **a. Business Breakfast Planning**

McMahon sent out packets that include a descriptor for the keynote speaker, John Bourdeaux, President and CEO of AdvanceCT. AdvanceCT is a statewide nonprofit and the recruiting arm for the state of CT, and now also involved with business retention. DECD is mostly on the funding, financing, capital programming, grants, etc. They have contracted out with AdvanceCT to do the business development for the state. McMahon said he is very engaging has a great sense of humor and overall good with talking to crowds. He will talk about AdvanceCT initiatives and how they are trying to position the state. We will host the breakfast with the chamber of commerce in October. Will go into a deeper discussion of things happening locally. Blueprint Robotics will likely have started their project. Greg Vaca will likely have gotten Founders Square going. Day Hill Dome is expected to be completed around November. McMahon said the event is usually held in local hotels so he will need to ask for quotes. Hilton Garden Inn has been the location for the past few meetings. They had the best price and seemed to work well. No date has been set yet - need to lock in a date with John Bourdouex. Looking at Wednesday or Thursday mornings from 7:45 to 9:30 a.m. Themes in the past were focused on TOD, Transportation, Transit workforce development, energy. Graff asked if it included recruitment of commercial and industrial. McMahon said yes.

Karnes said it was a great idea to talk about Blueprint and the successes, but maybe more about the talk of vacant office space and what to do. It is more relevant to the present and future challenges. Of course AdvancedCT would be a great organization to talk about that.

McMahon said Peter usually summarizes different themes that are happening. He can certainly touch base on that.

Selig-Bennett asked are we only looking for large business or a combination? Souza says its really been the smaller companies 20-50 employees at most that have attended in the past. We will reach out to the big companies as well.

Loomer would rather not focus on the negative office space issue. Keep the positive economic development in the discussions. Souza said we can weave the office issue into the discussion.

b. 90 & 92 Deerfield Road

McMahon gave context to the location with some aerial mapping. He showed the neighboring properties and road access.

Stanadyne declared for bankruptcy in February. They had an operation of 100 engineers but shifted down to Carolinas. The challenge now is determining what we would like to see the property become moving forward. The market will inform us. There is a brownfields cleanup taking place under oversight of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and will impact the decisions of anyone who looks at the site. There is a separate party from Stanadyne responsible for the contamination. The extent of any environmental issues within the buildings is unknown to us. The disposition of the property through bankruptcy is yet to be determined but we want to be prepared in case there is a new buyer or abandonment. The responsible party for the cleanup is basically a holding company. The property is zoned Industrial. Stanadyne moved its corporate offices to the Carolinas. Karnes suggested knocking it down, cleaning it up and making it available. Show it to Congressman Larson. One reputable developer is looking at the property for distribution but we have concerns with the compatibility of the area. Depending upon the size distribution could happen by right. Over 200,000 SF it would require a special use. The property is approximately 50 acres. The proposed trail is outside the railroad along the river. Karnes thought it could be another Great Pond. A marina would not work. It could be a series of smaller buildings but that would drive up the cost to the developer. Something like the Ferrainas have done in town. On-shoring of manufacturing may be an opportunity. JLL is marketing the property. Cleanup will likely take a couple of years. Deerfield Avenue is a local serving street so that is a consideration. McMahon mentioned a potential access drive and said Taylor and Fenn is looking to have a battery storage facility in that area. The first question that AdvanceCT and MetroHartford Alliance would ask is what does the community want? What about a range of housing? Souza asked the Commission to provide any ideas so we can be responsive to those who will market the property.

c. Griffin Office Park

McMahon brought up an aerial map of Waterside Crossing and provided a description of the area and updates on various buildings. Developers from New York have acquired 1 Waterside Crossing, as well as 4, 6 and 8 Waterside Crossing. They are exploring reuse of these buildings and have had preliminary discussion with town staff. They are also looking at acquiring 2 and 3 Waterside Crossing.

Possible residential conversion to condos or apartments of existing buildings. Possibly use some of the parking areas for townhouses. Beacon Communities is looking at two office buildings in Avon for residential conversion. There was a bill in the legislature to providing funding for office conversion but it did not pass.

All of the buildings are about 40 years old. McMahon mentioned the abatement program for commercial properties over 40 years old.

Selig-Bennett mentioned that companies are starting to call their employees back to the office. Some people want the social environment of the office. McMahon said that trend is hybrid.

Souza said he would see this more of a mixed-use development like Great Pond than redevelopment as industrial flex buildings for Waterside around the pond.

Can we replicate something like Goodwin University with an educational use?

The Hartford building and Voya are both for sale. North Central market vacancy rate is about 40%.

McMahon mentioned the NY developer asked about conversion for hotel or assisted living and the opportunity to build higher. Karnes suggested flexibility under our zoning regulations and Souza said it would likely be a zoning overlay. Water and sewer capacity for residential would need to be determined.

McMahon asked the Commission to send any ideas to staff.

**4. ITEMS FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**

Surprise has been exploring how the Chamber of Commerce can be involved in workforce development initiatives and reinvigorating the Tobacco Valley Chamber activities. Fredette mentioned the Farmers Market, Concerts on the Green, the Monarch Festival, and Nightmare on Broad Street in October. Loomer mentioned the Chili fest and the Craft Fair.

**5. ITEMS FROM COMMISSION**

Karnes suggested visual improvements between Barts and Windsor Center. Fredette concurred with that suggestion. Underneath that sidewalk is significant utilities.

**6. ITEMS FROM STAFF**

Souza gave an update on Great Pond. He mentioned the Target refrigerated warehouse. 400 Groton is being marketed for non-distribution use. Noble Gas is developing a mixed-use project including a gas station, corporate office and banquet facility. Some retail is still expected but housing comes before that use.

Konica Minolta still has a presence. Building is approximately 40 years old.

Souza mentioned a meeting with Howden (former Spencer Turbine) and they are doing well.

Blueprint Robotics should be submitting plans for a building permit soon.

Dudleytown Brewing should be open in the Summer.

Baker Hollow Road reconstruction has commenced.

Condyne is purchasing land at 205 Baker Hollow Road to construct a 185,000 SF flex industrial building.

We are waiting on a building permit set for Greg Vaca's Founders Square project. Vaca closed on financing.

Mohan Sachdev has all the zoning approvals for Bowfield Green on Poquonock Ave and is working on the detailed architectural.

There have been several iterations for a site plan for 29 Windsor Avenue. TPZC will hold a special meeting in August for a first phase to include a gas station, convenience store and car wash.

Bradley Development League is looking at Manufacturing Month activities in October including a visit to a local manufacturer.

Both co-work spaces, Windsor Worx and the Collective Space, have opened.

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

No action taken

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Next meeting is scheduled for September 20, 2023.