

Willington Economic Development Commission

Special Meeting Minutes – September 15, 2021

In Attendance: Bill Rankin, Cheryl Mitchell, Matt Clark, Richard Maloney, John Guszowski, Samantha Hills & local residents

Richard Maloney called the Special Meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Approval of Minutes

Cheryl Mitchell made a Motion to Approve the Minutes of the August 11, 2021 meeting as written; Matt Clark seconded – Motion carried;

Present to Speak

N/A

Railroad Project Update

Bill indicated we were going to use next month to speak with Mr. Desiato; Phil is okay with sketch regarding the acreage on Route 32. John met with Phil on the 18th via phone. Phil was impressed with the sketch and said to John that is was okay to present to the railroad; sketch forwarded to Ed Foley with NECR to forward to G&W Railroad updated sketch and forwarded to EDC in final draft to be run by Phil as well as contact information. Bill met with Phil on September 7th. Update of GNW final draft and contact information needed; walked through some possible options once an interest is shown; full site vs. Partial site; would Mr. Desiato be the developer or sell to developer; layout costs; access road; prepared on September 7th for future preparations. Phil needs time to prepare and Bill suggested he talk with John and Mike. John asked what Phil needs for support and if there are interested parties, what would they want from Phil? Bill said they would approach with already having had discussions of initial interest. Discussion with railroad once it gets to the table; railroad interested in the cost of a big warehouse; serve multiple tenants (next step) have an interest/work through economics; Planning & Zoning/railroad. Mike D'Amato said the next thing is to get into formal discussions after Planning & Zoning; likely some regulatory tweaks to be made. Bill is in agreement with next steps. If there is big box interest will want to move on it and the town is on board with something like this, they are in a hurry as there was a lost opportunity in SW. John will solidify with Phil and the Town is here to help. Rick asked if EDC refers to zoning or will Mike handle internally? Can John present? Feedback is needed. Rick asked Mike to put on the agenda.

Old Business

South Willington Village: has gone to CROG; reviewed plan – no apparent conflict with regional plans or policies. Public Hearing advertised on this amendment and other matters. Mike and John will be there and any other member of EDC is welcome to attend.

Designated Neighborhood Commercial: At the Routes 74/32 intersection Mike indicated they are proposing commercial zoning in that area; tweaking uses for that area. Amending some of the permitted accessory uses to allow outdoor dining, apartments above the main floor; Bed & Breakfast; simplifying approval process and adding distillery, excess if 5,000 square feet then approval needed; terms. Rick asked Mike if parking has been addressed? Not addressed – delete high intensity uses; expands regulatory review for restaurants for example; more restrictive than it needs to be – proposing deleting this section and alcohol/liquor requirements. Regulate use and not what permit is requirement. (Planning & Zoning should not be involved? Mike wanted to add purpose of this is that Willington is not likely a town that will do a geographical survey, our regulations will cover this; need to be able to respond to big companies; set up so that EDC has ability to regulate the use and not Planning & Zoning. The key is how quickly we can get the town them to a green light; revising the regulations now allows for this. Tax abatement program per Rick – we will look at that for these businesses; Bill says that helps for a new business opening up. Permit process will pay for staff fees but need flexibility per Rick. Matt asked for Public Hearing next Tuesday (Planning & Zoning on town calendar) Agenda will be published tomorrow.

New Business

Rural community – it is difficult to communicate with town businesses. Any comments from commission? Bill said update website as a tool for that.

American Recovery Act Funding Uses: We will be reaching out so that is good to reach out to businesses. Assistance Program is definitely a way to do that. Samantha indicated in the future we could do a google survey on the website and ask questions and provide comments as to what businesses want; email address is a good idea; link article in Willington Word and do quarterly emails. Rick asked Samantha how to execute that. Can out a hot link on to website and can do it from our EDC email and link the website to our Facebook page. Rick confirmed – create a survey from gmail account and advertise on website and Facebook. Rick and Samantha will talk off line about this. Mike indicated Willington business website has 125 verified businesses when website went live (as of April, 2020) survey done and have email list. Willington Facebook (community) files, businesses can post here and EDC could grab the information from here. Matt will assist Rick and Samantha; Rick will set it up.

American Recovery Act Funding Uses: Sent overview on purpose/eligibility; intent to move American Recoveries Act Fund out of businesses ASAP – will write up a letter to Board of Selectmen for review and implementation so we can create an application. Matt has comments on questions we are asking – Rick suggested for him to email the group. John says no specific questions are being asked. The comments will assist. Mike mentioned operationally

Erika requested submission to the Town; Mike already sent to Erika just to let them know program is coming, no details given. Samantha had some comments and some changes she would like to see; we need to be transparent on what qualifies the business. John clarifies that not auditing; purpose funds available to Town so far as there is a nexus to recover from COVID (these are Federal dollars not Town dollars); needs to be accountability and nexus toward the purpose of the program. According to John should describe how businesses were affected; how funds to be spent. This will be a first come, first served since everyone was affected by COVID. The amount depends on how many requests and the deadline of requests. \$15,000.00 cap; application time frame or first come, first served? Amend the application and send notes to John and will be put on the agenda for next month. EDC needs to put an application together;

Update on all projects in town: Mike has left. John indicated going from another draft on sidewalks; no pedestrian island; DOT is pushing back; conversations with potential developers up by Fed/Ex - preliminary conversation with developers. If there are action items John will keep us in the loop.

Rick asked if there were any final comments from the public. Being none, Matt made a Motion to Adjourn at 6:22 PM, Bill seconded – Motion carried

Respectfully Submitted:

Cheryl Mitchell

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