

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF April 2, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Stewart, Chair
George Mantak, Regular at 8:50
Gary Elwell, Regular
Eb Musiol, Regular
Kevin Bouley, Regular
Dave Barrow, Alternate Seated as Regular until 8:50

MEMBERS ABSENT: Robert Bowser, Alternate

OTHERS PRESENT: Steven R. Werbner, Town Manager
Linda Farmer, Director of Planning
Jack Scavone, Liaison to Planning & Zoning Commission
Jeffrey Vose, Municipal Services Manager, Metro Hartford Alliance

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bob Stewart called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m. in the Hicks Memorial Municipal Center Council Chambers, 21 Tolland Green, Tolland, Connecticut. Alternate Dave Barrow was seated as a Regular Member.

1. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Motion: Elwell/Bouley to accept the Minutes of the March 5, 2008 Regular meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

2. ACTIVITIES REPORT

1. State Route 195 Widening Project – Mr. Werbner said the public meeting went very well. It is anticipated that it will be summer of 2010 for beginning of construction.
2. Route 195 Corridor Study Update – Mr. Werbner invited commissioners to the next meeting on April 24th for a workshop on traffic analysis.
3. Sewer Facilities Plan – Mr. Werbner said it is being worked on.
4. Planning & Zoning Commission – Activity Report –
 - a. Linda Farmer reported that the new owners of the Peace Lutheran property have submitted their plans for review. Dave Smith is working with them on road maintenance and Ms. Farmer is reviewing their landscaping plan. The application will require Planning & Zoning approval for the change in use. The owners are no longer planning a residential apartment component partly due to the separating distance required between residential and a liquor sales business.
 - b. Ms. Farmer said she has been working with Rob Arute, partner to Ray Crossen regarding the right in/right out access to their property. They will be allowed up to an 80% coverage ratio as part of the agreement. Mark Peterson has drawn new plans connecting Fieldstone & Meetinghouse across the back of this property. Mr. Stewart said the property is now offered for sale for \$1,200,000.
 - c. A public workshop will be held on Monday April 21st regarding the Tolland Plan of Conservation & Development led by Glenn Chalder of Planometrics. Mr. Stewart encouraged as many commissioners as possible to attend.
 - d. Planning & Zoning has scheduled a public hearing on May 27, 2008 for a creating a Technology & Office Zone (TOZ). Ms. Farmer said the proposed regulations are required to be reviewed by CRCOG and the Town Attorney. Mr. Stewart said he saw serious problems with the wording of the regulations. Ms. Farmer said she met with Richard Knight yesterday (Chair of Planning & Zoning) and he will schedule 15 minute time slots at the public hearing for input to the commission. Ms. Farmer reviewed the draft regulations and explained items questioned by the EDC. Next Monday's Planning & Zoning agenda includes a zone line along Route 195 for the proposed TOZ zone which includes nearly all of Art Gottier's property. Ms. Farmer shared a map indicating the new zone lines. Commissioners agreed to move ahead to New Business Item 3.2 regarding the TOZ regulations.

- 3.2 Proposed Technology & Office Zone (TOZ) – Mr. Stewart asked if a restaurant would be allowed in the new zone and Ms. Farmer explained that the current proposed regulation was written for only office use. She noted that access management was lacking in the regulations and if significant changes are made, the proposed regulations will need to be re-advertised. Mr. Mantak asked how many acres would be affected. Ms. Farmer said she would do the calculation. Commissioners agreed they would not want the regulations so restricted that it would prohibit a restaurant or health club to be part of a campus setting technology park. Mr. Mantak said he hesitates to lock in current property owners to one use of office only. Mr. Bouley encouraged Mr. Mantak to put his thoughts in writing. Jeff Vose encouraged commissioners that a technology zone needs to be open and flexible to attract developers. Mr. Vose said he would look to see what other towns had this type of regulation and send a copy to Linda Farmer and George Mantak. Mr. Bouley said he met with Mr. Knight to try and explain his goals as a property owner. Mr. Bouley explained that this type of zoning has been discussed over the last four years and this proposed regulation does not meet those goals. As Ms. Farmer prepared to leave the meeting, Mr. Stewart asked about the Better Bedding sign. Ms. Farmer said they received approval for the size of the sign but not to be back lit. She also asked them for plans of the new gable end façade where they plan to place the sign. Ms. Farmer left the meeting at 8:15 a.m. Back to the TOZ topic at hand, Mr. Bouley encouraged commissioners by saying the problem of the poorly written regulation could be solved by the property owners signing a petition that would require a super majority vote by the Planning & Zoning Commission. Rather than try to respond/rewrite the proposed regulation, the Economic Development Commission could submit their comments, along with the collective comments made over the last four years, to lay a foundation for new regulations. Technology will be the focus with recognition for businesses to be included that would support the technology campus. Mr. Mantak will write an overview and send a draft to commissioners before the next meeting.

Commissioners agreed to go to New Business Item 3.1

3. NEW BUSINESS -

1. Better Bedding Sign Request to ZBA – Mr. Stewart reported that Better Bedding is looking to occupy the former Tolland Pharmacy in Meetinghouse Commons. As mentioned by Ms. Farmer, they are looking to add a gable front to the building to hold their sign. Mr. Stewart said he spoke with the applicant prior to the ZBA meeting and he had not been told by staff that they would need to go to Planning & Zoning for comments before ZBA or possibly after depending on the extent of changes to the building. Mr. Stewart is concerned they also need to go to the Design Advisory Board and their April meeting was cancelled. Mr. Stewart said he was frustrated by staff not informing the applicant of the proper steps. Mr. Werbner stated that he has not had any developer/business owner come to him directly with such a complaint and if there are procedural concerns, he wants to address it. In his role as Economic Development Director, he asked Mr. Stewart to forward those calls to him.

Commissioners moved ahead to Old Business – Item 4.2

- 4.2 Star Hill Family Athletic Center Update – Mr. Stewart reported that the last lawsuit has been settled. The application will go before Planning & Zoning on April 14th with minor changes for approval. Their intent is to then purchase the land on the 15th or 16th. Mr. Werbner said they have asked to begin to clear the lot starting next week before they own the property. He said they will sign a hold harmless agreement along with some stipulations including erosion & sedimentation control. One concern was with the value of the wood being harvested on the land. This one or two week jumpstart is very important to Star Hill in their overall plan and Mr. Werbner said they have been good to their commitments to date. Mr. Vose confirmed this type of arrangement is fairly common with an escrow held for the value of the wood.

TOLLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

April 2, 2008 meeting

MOTION: Mantak/Musiol – The Economic Development Commission recommends approval for Mr. Werbner to allow the Star Hill Family Athletic Center to begin work on Lot 11 before their closing with the hold harmless agreement and other stipulations as Mr. Werbner deems proper. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Werbner left the meeting at 8:39.

Commissioners returned to Activities Report – Item 2.5

5. Metro Hartford Alliance Report – Mr. Vose described a program of annual awards to a successful business. He will provide applications to Mr. Stewart and Mr. Werbner if they would like to nominate a business in town. He stated that Metro Hartford is very busy on the legislative front and commissioners could go to www.metrohartford.com to see all the projects that are being worked on. He offered a free subscription to the Hartford Business Journal if any one was interested. Mr. Mantak repeated a request from a previous meeting for a copy of the CRCOG study on impact/non-impact of drive-thrus. Mr. Vose and Mr. Elwell left the meeting at 8:47.
 6. Town Council Liaison Comments - none.
4. OLD BUSINESS
1. Business Visitation Program – No additional appointments are made at this time.
5. GENERAL BUSINESS
1. Tolland Monthly Magazine – no report.
 2. Correspondence – none
 3. Local Business Activity –
 - a. Mr. Stewart – New signs for his property are being built.
 - b. Mr. Barrows – Cardio Express is planning to open May 1st.
 - c. Mr. Bouley – He was invited to be part of the Fox 61 morning news show and a segment was filmed this past Monday and another segment will be aired tomorrow morning. He reported that one of the incubator companies, Control Station, had its first net positive quarter and 6 of the 7 employees are UCONN graduates.
 4. Other Commission Business – none.
 5. Adjournment -

Motion: Bouley/Musiol passed unanimously to pay the clerk and to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Heidi Cerrigione, Clerk