(Note: These Minutes are draft until approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Economic Development Committee)

**NEW FAIRFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**April 19, 2021**

**Present via Webinar:** Myke Furhman, Chair

Michael Kiviat

James Kloos

Kathleen DiTullio

Greg Manning

Also Present: Pat Del Monaco, First Selectman

Kimberly Morgan, United Way of Western CT

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Mr. Furhman.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Approval of Minutes – February 15th Regular Meeting**

*Mr. Furhman moved to suspend the rules to amend the agenda to add the acceptance of the March 15th minutes, seconded by Ms. DiTullio and passed unanimously.*

*Mr. Furhman moved to approve the March 15th minutes, seconded by Ms. DiTullio and passed unanimously.*

**4. Opening Public Comment & Participation**

Jim Mellett, 22 Curtis Ave, New Fairfield, said the EDC should not think that because there is no sewer that that is why businesses are vacant. He said he used to own Candlewood Grill which was a very successful restaurant. He said the landlords charged exorbitant rents which eventually put the restaurant out of business. He said he was a member of the WPCA and wondered if EDC members had seen their report from 2000 regarding the sewer plans for New Fairfield.

Ms. DiTullio said she had spoken to numerous tenants and some have said rent and common charges were onerous and some said the opposite. She said EDC did a survey and found that without a sewer system they could not attract the type of restaurants that citizens want to see.

Mr. Furhman said he was given the description for commissioners and since there is now a vacancy on the commission they should start looking for candidates.

**5. Correspondence & Announcements**

First Selectman Del Monaco said work is being done in the food center plaza in the center of town. She also said the final report on Marjorie Trail will be out within a couple of weeks and Representative Gucker is working on getting this into the bonding route.

**6. Prosperi Key Presentation – Kim Morgan**

Kim Morgan, President of the United Way of Western Connecticut, said they will be launching this project in June. She said the idea is to engage the local business community and government to benefit small businesses. The ALICE population (asset limited, income constrained, employed) who live paycheck to paycheck is the target. Forty one percent of the population in Fairfield County and 28% in New Fairfield are considered part of the ALICE population.

Prosperi Key will have a marketplace where retail workers, grocery store workers and small business owners can get a service they need at a discount price - automotive store, for instance, can offer a discount on an oil change. There is a fee to be on the platform but the first three months would be free. The ALICE population does not want charity.

There will also be a career opportunities section on the platform.

This will be structured like a club where the members will be charged $3 or $4 a year to belong.

Mr. Kiviat thought this was a great idea and Mr. Manning said anything EDC can do to move this initiative along would be helpful.

Mr. Furhman said this would be a benefit to businesses and the consumer. He asked how EDC could help. Mr. Manning suggested EDC could bring awareness about the initiative to the Town.

Mrs. Morgan said she is already soliciting businesses and Elmer's Diner has already signed on.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**7. Beautification Project – Signs Update**

Mr. Manning said he, Mr. Kiviat and Mr. Kloos met to discuss next steps. He reached out to the State as they are requiring an application for an easement and they need to know what the sign will look like. The Director of Public Works suggested the Town consider using a sign already made by the DOT which is a yellow directional sign that is 2’x4’ with two posts and is already in stock with the DOT. The EDC would then have an overlay printed with Welcome to New Fairfield and would wrap the existing directional sign. The State needs to know the size, color and location which will be the end of Mill Town Road.

Mr. Manning suggested a blue and white sign with some green in it with a picture of Candlewood Lake as the background.

Mr. Kiviat said he liked the vinyl wrap because the Town could change it at any time. Mr. Kloos said he liked the low cost solution and the colors.

Mr. Manning said in the survey everyone said Candlewood Lake was the focal point for New Fairfield.

Ms. Del Monaco said the Town does have a streetscape account that could be used for this type of beautification project.

Mr. Furhman asked what the material would be and Mr. Manning said it is a reflective material that will adhere to the sign. Mr. Furhman said he liked the photo realistic look but wondered if it would look cheap compared to a crafted wood sign. Ms. DiTullio suggested a frame around the sign which might add a contrasting color.

Mr. Furhman asked what the next steps would be and Mr. Manning said he would reach back out to the Public Works Director and the State and advise of the use of the sign and proposed colors. Mr. Furhman said if this is the direction then maybe they could include Haviland Hollow at the same time

**8. Local Business Promotion.- Video project**

Mr. Furhman said they have shot four videos and all have been edited except for Biscotti’s. New Fairfield Orthodontics will go live this week. Bruno’s still needs to be recorded. Another round of videos will be done next month as other businesses are interested.

Mr. Manning thanked Mr. Furhman for all his work on this project and Ms. DiTullio dittoed the thanks.

**9. Small Business Grants**

Mark Werner and Mr. Furhman talked about this and Mr. Werner was going to circle back to Ms. Del Monaco. Ms. Del Monaco said she has not specifically discussed this with Mr. Werner yet but the Town was told it could not use taxpayer money to provide grants to small businesses.

Mr. Furhman said maybe they could set up a find to ask for donations.

**10. Branding/Logo Update**

Mr. Furhman said the idea here was to create a brand identity for the business district to make the downtown area seem more unified. Mr. Kiviat has been working with a local designer who sent some mock ups to consider. Mr. Kiviat introduced Douglass Ridgeway who said he produced several concepts. Mr. Kiviat said his thought also was that a design could go on t-shirts, hats, etc. Mr. Ridgeway discussed some of the ideas behind the designs. Mr. Manning said he loved the diversity in the options. Mr. Furhman asked all to vote on their first, second and third favorite.

Mr. Ridgeway said the idea of the photo realistic sign per the signage discussed earlier could lead to the old postcard idea of “Greetings From…”

**11. E-Commerce Parking Signage**

Mr. Furhman said Mr. Werner was spearheading this but asked Ms. Del Monaco if she had any news and she said the Sergeant had identified two spaces where the signs could be located.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**12. Family Event Discussion to draw people to New Fairfield**

Mr. Manning said the Commission had started last year to think about things to do in 2020 like a movie night to draw people to the downtown area. Ms. Del Monaco said she was not sure if the Lion’s Club was pursuing the 4th of July parade or not but Parks & Recreation was moving forward with events. The Sip & Stroll will be moved from Spring to Fall and the Governor is removing most restrictions by May 19th. Ideas discussed included a boat parade, Sip & Stroll, Trick or Treat event and New Fairfield Days.

Mr. Manning suggested EDC think about a late summer event to bring foot traffic to downtown. Mr. Furhman noted New Milford is not going to hold its Village Fair Days this year. New Faifield could do something to get other vendors involved while prioritizing New Fairfield businesses.

Mr. Kloos said the New Fairfield Day was an awesome event and suggested perhaps a music fest with more than one band. Mr. Furhman did not want EDC to step on the toes of Parks and Recreation but felt an event could be held such as a bingo tent or music fest.

Mr. Mellett reminded the Commission about the Friends of Ball Pond who run music events on the lake in the summer.

Ms. Del Monaco suggested perhaps a September event after Labor Day and Mr. Furhman suggested an Oktoberfest. Mr. Ridgeway said there are a lot of people who make homebrews but they could not be sold. Mr. Furhman said maybe they could do a homebrew-off.

**13. Closing Public Comment**

Mr. Mallett wrapped up his conversation about the sewer report and said New Fairfield has shallow bedrock wells and so some people’s wells yield 3-5 gallons per minute which is sufficient for the average household. He said New Fairfield gets about 50” of rain a year and only about 10% gets into the bedrock acquifer.

Mrs. Morgan suggested to get buy in on the graphic designs and circulate through the businesses before making a decision.

**14. Adjournment**

*Mr. Furhman moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 pm, seconded by Ms. DiTullio and passed*

*unanimously.*

Minutes recorded by:



Recording Secretary

Received by Email on 4/21/2021 @ 3:04 pm

by Pamela J. Dohan, Town Clerk, New Fairfield