

**Town of Ridgefield  
Economic Development Commission  
Special Meeting held September 9, 2009  
Town Hall/Large Conference Room**

Unapproved Minutes

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: Bob Knight, Paul Levine, Bill Markus, Magdalena Fincham, and Rick O'Brien.

Guest - Mark Waterhouse, Garnet Consulting Services, Inc., Betty Brosius, Director of Planning, and Sam Webson, from Troop 76.

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m.

Bob Knight welcomed new recording secretary Hollie Palochick.

**News Updates:**

- ◆ Weir Farm National Historic Site has been selected to be featured on the backside of the new quarters that are coming out, representing Connecticut.
- ◆ The Library Board has withdrawn its demolition permit to tear down the old playhouse as a result of the new taskforce that Rudy Marconi is sitting on, they are going to explore other possibilities; Betty Brosius is on the taskforce as well.
- ◆ There was an article in last week's Ridgefield Press regarding re-zoning some land at the intersection of Route 35 & 116 to B-1, currently R-20. B. Brosius states that discussion regarding this are ongoing, proposing an amendment to a residential zone regulation called adaptive reuse of historic structures, which would preserve the buildings as well as the streetscape. A formal application has been submitted and will be heard at a public hearing sometime in late October.
- ◆ B. Brosius has been named on a Route 7 Taskforce between all the Municipalities and they will be meeting to discuss the issues from Danbury all the way to Norwalk and there will be representatives from the corridor all along the way, they will be meeting on September 24<sup>th</sup> in the Wilton Town Hall. B. Brosius states that if there is an opportunity at some point to get input from Ridgefield, that the EDC as well as the P&Z Commission and other entities would be prime people to contribute ideas & comments. B. Brosius would like to give a follow-up report after the first taskforce meeting.

**Garnet Report: By Mark Waterhouse**

- ◆ M. Waterhouse is currently working on the report, but before finishing it in the next couple of weeks, he wanted one last chance to get the most up to date information on all individual projects.

## **Sustainable and Renewable Energy Business Park and Showroom: By Magdalena Fincham**

- ◆ P. Levine and M. Fincham are continuing to work with Mike Greenberg.
- ◆ The current plan that has some economic challenges and to make it profitable there is a significant gap between the cost and building it and building it in all the environmentally friendly products and services that will be showcased.
- ◆ In order to build it as a green building it will be a significant increase in cost and given the real estate market today they are not taking the worst conservative approach but they are trying to take a realistic approach as to what they could the could rent the spaces out for and there is just a gap there.
- ◆ The State's concern would be more, or their states perspective would be more at looking at how many jobs it would create currently according to Representative Frey.
- ◆ We are working with M. Greenberg to figure out if we could get an estimate of how many jobs, maybe not for the particularly for the building itself but because of the presence of the building being there, how many jobs we anticipate would be created or retained in Connecticut and for Connecticut businesses as a result of it.
- ◆ Dan Conlon Architects is preparing a press release on the proposed project to be shown to First Selectman and Board of Selectman as courtesy prior to release
- ◆ We will see what public opinion is generated out of the article, there will be contact information there for M. Greenberg and were hoping that maybe potentially interested vendors would contact him that would be interested in renting space there, or one possibility that were considering for bridging that gap is a management company a development partner for M. Greenberg, where M. Greenberg builds it but the partner would be the one that runs it, who kind of hires the tour guides, the project manager that takes you from vendor to vendor. To possibly building some type of a conference room area where once you visit the vendors and service providers you can go into this room with your project manager and pull it all together and figure out what your going to buy and from whom, so we are looking at trying to find that person for M. Greenberg.
- ◆ M. Greenberg has 45,000 square feet that has been developed, if this thing took off that he would convert that space to the same concept. This would be cheap space and that would reduce his overall cost of occupancy.
- ◆ It would be a nice industry for Ridgefield to be known for.
- ◆ P. Levine provided background information for the Commission and advised: "I've only known him [Michael Greenberg] since I, since this committee was formed. The first factor was Betty's help was that you needed help to, you wanted to develop a showroom on exit, on route 7 and the zoning precluded retail, so we went to Betty and said it's a showroom not a retail establishment, which is true and Betty said that's not a problem at all, so that was what? Three years ago, so the relationship has been over that period time and we've tried to help him as definitely a home grown manufacturing business in Ridgefield."

### **Prospective Development: By Rick O'Brien**

- ◆ Schlumberger has dropped the price on the property from \$14,000,000 to \$9,900,000.
- ◆ There is a wide array of potential options that could occur with the Schlumberger property.
- ◆ B. Knight mentioned that there is an interested party from an international corporation that is looking at another home in the United States and is possibly looking at Ridgefield as well as other municipalities nearby for some R&D and eventually some light manufacturing.

### **Arts and Cultural: By Bill Markus**

- ◆ On October 3, 2009 from 1:00-5:00pm they are having their Art Walk, which will be booths/tables in Ballard Park and their Cultural Festival and I think they are getting pretty good sign ups for that. They have invited local business to take tables to exhibit what they do, hopefully to interest people in participating in their businesses (i.e.: dance schools, art school, or come in and buy products from them), they are also opening it up to locations outside Ridgefield.
- ◆ This would be a great opportunity for members of the EDC to walk around and introduce themselves.
- ◆ There isn't a lot happening with the Chekhov Festival this year. R. Marconi received a phone call from Russia; it was someone related to Chekhov wanting to come over. Hopefully next year the theater event that they are going to do this year will help pick up a little bit of steam and we'll go from there.
- ◆ Another thing that came out of the meeting with John Cusano was the promotion of a Creative Economy Workshop to be held here in Ridgefield. M. Roth was trying to get a speaker lined up, 1<sup>st</sup> speaker which was Stan McMillan couldn't meet the date, so J. Cusano is working with her to get another appropriate speaker. This speaker would talk about how we would promote a creative economy. M. Roth is looking to hold an Annual Regional Summit that we be geared toward local business people.

### **Pond's Edge: By Chris Fisher**

- ◆ Met with Representatives of Danbury Hospital and reached out to the property owners to see what they want to try and accomplish.
- ◆ They have done some demographic outreach to some residents of the town to figure out what they could possibly use that space for (wellness center, women's health center, a couple of other things I think were trying to get data on).
- ◆ As far as the rest of the property, the building that is further south on the site is really unoccupied at this point; there is still some space that is unoccupied in the principal building that's been improved.
- ◆ The property owner has had a couple of different end-users come to them at various points in time, all different kinds of things maybe running a gamete from a very assembly type operations to a couple of different things that have been mentioned, but nothings really stuck yet on that parcel, and he really had indicated that he's had a good working relationship with P&Z.

- ◆ To perspective tenants we can help facilitate a town communication with that individual on how they will be received, what the issues are, try to run through the process as best we can, so it's still an important site for our purposes to try to help the property owner to continue with the build out of it.
- ◆ The only other concept that came up in my conversation with the property owner was the zoning itself. Some concept as to whether or not there could be potential uses there. To get the use that's there now was a whole re-zoning initiative.
- ◆ I think, at least what I conveyed to the property owners is that we as an EDC, not just for that property but for some of these similar properties up and down Route seven, we think might make some sense as to possible re-zonings. I think that's where that property stands.

### **Downtown: B.Knight**

- ◆ Branchville Train Station, look into making a sign for the Weir Farm National Historic Site.
- ◆ Working with M. Roth of the Chamber of Commerce, proposing a downtown initiative comprised of arts, retail, and restaurants.

### **CERO:**

- ◆ Membership is \$550; the EDC doesn't have an extra \$550.
- ◆ What would the benefit be to the EDC?
- ◆ M. Waterhouse to look into the benefits.

### **Website:**

- ◆ The website should have as many links as possible.
- ◆ When M. Waterhouse's report comes out, we are going to need some collateral material, possibly a blog.
- ◆ M. Waterhouse suggested that an electronic newsletter be created.
- ◆ M. Robinson is working with Two Brothers Web Design; so far it will be \$200 for the server, and \$600 for the initial work that they are going to do.
- ◆ B. Markus suggested that everyone check out the Ridgefield Arts Council website, they have a great website.
- ◆ B. Knight states that a website committee needs to be established, M. Robinson will head this and M. Fincham would like to be on this committee.

### **Meeting Minutes:**

- ◆ B. Markus moved and M. Fincham seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the May 11, 2009 Economic Development Commission Meeting. Motion passed 5-0. P. Levine had left the room.
- ◆ M. Fincham moved and B. Markus seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the June 8, 2009 Economic Development Commission Meeting. Motion passed 5-0. P. Levine had left the room.

- ◆ C. Fisher moved and M. Markus seconded a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the June 22, 2009 Economic Development Commission Special Meeting. Motion passed 4-0-1. M. Fincham abstained; P. Levine had left the room.
  
- ◆ B. Markus moved and R. O'Brien seconded a motion to adjourn the Economic Commission Special Meeting at 8:34pm. Motion passed 5-0. P. Levine had left the room.

Respectfully submitted,

Hollie Palochick  
Secretary