

Willington Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes - DRAFT - November 10, 2021

In Attendance: John Guskowski, Richard Maloney, Bill Rankin, Cheryl Mitchell, Matt Clark, Mike D'Amato, Samantha Hills

Richard Maloney called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

Approval of Minutes

Cheryl Mitchell made a Motion to Approve the Minutes of the September 15th meeting as written; Bill Rankin seconded – Motion carried

Old Business – Zoning Amendments

Reaction to amendments to zoning regulations move on to create special districts to allow special uses. John indicated Mike and he have been working on the best approach. The idea being creating opportunity for special zoning district requirements that would require a master plan approach and then a subsequent special development permit to implement the design of the plans to give the applicant a lot of flexibility and gives the commissioner a high bar for deciding suitability. John feels they have sort of a hybridized approach. Mike indicated that traditional development districts are ones they have seen in other towns. They are development friendly in that they provide flexibility but not development friendly in process, provides for map change and some type of additional plan review or a special permit. If does provide for some site development flexibility but still in a multi application, multi month and multi hearing process which is very cumbersome. Discretion is on the front end and once you get through the master plan and concept plan approval the final design is administrative and doesn't require a public hearing which benefits when a developer has a project that they have the master plan approved which shows a layout and proposed uses and does not need another public hearing plan; not looking to create that here. Building in flexibility is a good idea and they will keep working on this. Bill asked if it is a friendly way to do business with the town or is it a way for us to make it easier if we can get this done to deal with the town? Mike indicated it is a process that builds incremental support for a project and on the town side we get additional controls better design and higher level aesthetics – the trade off is we give them a little bit more density, a little bit more coverage or flexibility with uses. 50% engineering from a plan perspective; we have seen conceptually what the site will look like and what the layout might look like; feels it will make everyone more comfortable. John agreed – welcomes developers with good ideas and gives commission discretion to give okay on zone change. John indicates it is a bit more cumbersome but encourages a more sophisticated level of developer. Bills feels it is a great idea. Mike indicated at next meeting he will provide a draft on the approach.

Railroad Project Update

Bill's update is not encouraging. He could not reach Mr. Desiato. Phil is anxious about our timing vs his timing. Trying to get contact information from him so there is a person to talk to. He will continue to pursue him. Move on to create interest with state. Ed Foley is going to introduce concept to Joe Courtney. Bill is willing to discuss property on 84 and ride on his coattails. Infrastructure bill will be passed; recommended we continue to pursue Phil. Rick said resources are needed on site development access – do some survey work. Bill walked property 6 weeks ago through Knight's property; access of

Route 32 is better, Knights may have to be involved for access purposes. Assuming we will get pushback from townspeople on Desiato access. Traffic study will answer a lot of questions. State may be motivated to do something here. Mike pulled up a map of the parcel in question. State forest concerns may make it more difficult. Plenty of room there to be developed. Put on agenda for next meeting; 20 acres minimum needed; will see if there is that much land available.

American Recovery Act

Draft sent to Selectmen's office. Mike indicated at last meeting there was a discussion to implement Stafford's model. Create a commission to review requirements and disburse funds. If a commission is created would not need a meeting with town as commission would be authorized. Group of technical folks (staffs & other professionals). Town looks like it will move in that direction but will be some time before funds are disbursed. Mike will let the Board of Selectmen know that push funds now (sooner rather than later). Members of commission felt that experts are not required specifically.

CEDAS (CT Economic Development Association)

John received email. Developer best practices certification for local boards/commissions to be more user friendly; can use CEDAS as a resource. Accepting applications now for best practices certification. Discussed requirements; provides applicants to be put out there that Willington is out there and open for business. John indicated it would take a few days to put it all together with staff support. Rick made a Motion to Authorize Staff to Move forward; Samantha Hills seconded – Motion carried.

CIP


We have a CIP committee and we can reach out to get a line item for funding (ie tax abatement for a business). Mike received an email that we need to prepare CIP requests for this upcoming cycle; can include whatever commission thinks; we do not currently have any items; need to know by December meeting.

Samantha Hills mentioned getting together on communications meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:23 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Cheryl Mitchell

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