

NEWINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

March 3, 2021

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chairman Maria Pane called the regular zoom meeting of the Newington Economic Development Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

III. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present

Commissioner Jennifer Ancona
Commissioner Dana Havens
Commissioner David Marsden
Commissioner Jerilyn Nagal
Commissioner Maria Pane
Commissioner Fernando Rosa (7:14)
Commissioner Jay Slater

Commissioners Absent

Chairman Theresa Avey
Commissioner Robert Rioux
Commissioner Clifford Stamm

IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the February meeting were approved unanimously with six voting YEA.

V. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (Speakers limited to two minutes.)

None

VI. **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT**

None

VII. **OLD BUSINESS**

None

Dana Havens
Town Clerk

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VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Beautification Committee

Keith Chapman said that the idea of a beautification committee had come up at one of the council meetings and while this is a new undertaking, there is a line item in the budget for \$25,000 per year for beautification committee functions. He presented what other towns had done for a beautification committee to give the Commission an idea of what could be done for the town. He also indicated that he thought that the Economic Development Commission would be a logical place to start since they are closely involved with the community and the businesses.

This project would involve working with the businesses and making things more attractive as people came into the town. The Beautification Committee would serve as advisory committee to the Council working to improve the appearance of Main Street and the surrounding areas. This could incorporate planting in public areas, seasonal decorations, and planting receptacles. The Hartford Avenue and the Main Street intersection was offered as an example of an area that is going to be modernized over the next couple of years, and whether it be benches, or some type of enclosure, something that will make Newington stand out and be inviting to visitors.

The Commission could be responsible for educating the public on seasonal plantings, hoping that areas of town will be consistently attractive during the entire year. Working with organizations that would be able to assist in the projects would be an important part of the Commission's job. Clubs, civic organizations, associations from the different areas of town would be included in the planning of the projects. It is also assisting the public works department and assisting the town staff to address unsightly areas. No one has made a concentrated effort to clean up and maintain the unsightly areas in town and that should be an ongoing part of the beautification effort.

Keith was looking for feedback from the Commission as to whether this was something that the Commission might be interested in doing so that he could advise the Council of their decision.

It was suggested that the Beautification Commission go along with the Environmental Quality Commission since their focus has always been around Earth Day.

Information can be gathered from some of the other towns in the area to see what they are doing on a project such as this, as if there is a written plan from another town, it may well fit into the plan for Newington. Keith can collect the information from the surrounding towns and present it to this Commission and then develop that into a Town of Newington model that could be forwarded to the Council to adopt or reject.

The businesses in town can participate in this project, but shouldn't be expected to contribute financially to any of the improvements. Things have been difficult for the businesses this year, and they should not be asked to contribute financially anything further, but can be involved in additional ways.

Commissioner Nagel reminded the Commission that the 150th Anniversary Committee had purchased 5,000 daffodil bulbs that would be planted throughout the town and would be coming up in the spring.

Keith provided an update on some of the things that were going on in town; the developers of the hotel on Fenn Road will be submitting their plans to Planning and Zoning shortly and they will purchase the property from Richard Hayes probably by the middle of April; still working with the sale of the National Welding four acre site, that is going forward, and there has been activity at 697 Cedar Street which is probably going to be occupied shortly. In the center of town, there are several interested parties in the Keeney property, one from out of state that has been there several times, and will be returning.

The town is talking to the owner of the property at the top of the mountain, Mr. Frisbee, and got an update on what is going on with that property. There have also been constant conversations about 3333 Berlin Turnpike where there is strong interest in developing that parcel. There are a couple of new restaurants in town, one which is sharing property with Bertucci's and the new company will spur interest in going there.

There were multiple examples of what other towns have been doing regarding beautification displayed on the screen for the Commissioners to see, and Keith offered to copy all of them and send them out to the Commissioners so that they can review them and read them over before the next meeting so there will be an understanding of what other towns are doing, if you are interested as a Commission in pursuing this.

Commissioner Havens pointed out that there were groups in Newington that would help, and that the Commission could oversee it and coordinate it, but groups like the Newington Garden Club, etc., could assist, but the Economic Development Commission should coordinate it.

It was the unanimous opinion of the Commission that this was a project that the Commission wanted to pursue.

Keith indicated that it was strange what was happening in Newington right now; kind of like waking up a sleeping dog, all of a sudden the town is getting a lot of economic development activity and that is good for the town.

Also of interest because of the lack of land in Newington for development, focus should be on re-development of Newington. Many of the areas in town are ripe for redevelopment and the thinking is what might happen is building up, taking what is there, maybe removing it and having developers build higher story buildings. We have a lot of one story buildings throughout the town, but those one story buildings have served the purpose and in the future there may be a different use in what is being built here.

Commissioner Nagel questioned if there was a regulation as to how high the buildings could be and that would have to get changed first.

Keith indicated that there might have to be some modifications to the regulations before anything could be done.

Keith will report back to the Council that the Economic Development Commission is willing to take on the responsibility of coordinating the Beautification Project. It will take a couple of months to get everything in place and if the Council approves the \$25,000 there will be funding to move forward with ideas for the projects.

Commissioner Havens mentioned partnering with the High School, the Key Club, and the Honors Society for community service hours, even just residents of the town who have ideas for the Commission should be encouraged to participate.

Commissioner Nagel questioned the status of the brochure that was to be developed and what happened to it? The pictures to be used hadn't been determined yet so that needs to get back on track.

Commissioner Havens had heard that the owner of the Joanne's Fabric wanted to add some new buildings up in the front of the parking lot area, and we have a new tenant in the Laser Quest Plaza, Smoothy King is going in there, a very popular chain down south. A gas station/convenience store is going in across from the Italian Gourmet restaurant.

IX. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (Speakers limited to two minutes)

None


X. **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Pane asked if anyone had a copy of the districts that had been assigned to the EDC members. Commissioner Havens had a copy and there may be a copy on the Facebook page as well.

XI. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Slater moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nagel. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Nonie Addis,
Recording Secretary