

NEWINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Special Meeting

April 6, 2023

Chairman Theresa Avey called the Special Meeting of the Newington Economic Development Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present

Chairman Theresa Avey
Commissioner Meri Beatrice
Commissioner Dana Havens
Commissioner Jerilyn Nagel

Commissioners Absent

Commissioner Chip Stamm

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III. PRESENTATION OF PLANS FOR THE FORMER KENEY MANUFACTURING CO.

Mr. Stillman expressed appreciation to the Commission and the Town of Newington for their interest in the renovation of the Keney Manufacturing Company. The building was acquired by the present owners about a year ago and they tried to anticipate the current and future trends of business.

The building was constructed in 1925 as a manufacturing and distribution center of plumbing products although the structure was not built at one time, instead it was many additions of additions to reach the present structure. The structure, as seen from Main Street is not the original design, with the façade of the building facing west, and the east side, the most recent addition a high based warehouse building which has been leased to a local firm. Their firm would aim to improve the facility by leaving the environment better than before, if there would be a physical aesthetic improvement to the streetscape and if it can be habituated by local businesses. An additional aim is to provide places of peace, solitude, places where the public can relax, and they have attempted to do that architecturally and design-wise.

On the Main Street side of the building, one of the revisions of the building was to install a metal cladding applied above the brick façade which covered the original design of the building which was more of an art deco look that was applied to the brick work, and the curves which was unusual for the time period of construction. Some of the interventions have been peeled away and the art deco look of the building was enhanced. A screen was added on the top of the building at the center to balance the appearance of the building and also to screen the mechanical equipment that would be located behind the screen. The Main Street façade will be enhanced to include the historical look of the building, landscaping, and the walkway up to the

entrance flanked by two quarter round brick knee walls and on the inside there is seating, in the hope of enticing human activity to the area.

The retail part of the building will contain a lot glass to give a clear impression of vitality. This will enable local businesses to locate in this building in the hopes that the goal could be realized.

Currently the Data Graphics building and the main building are connected with a bridge, and the two buildings will be severed by removing the bridge and having the buildings stand on their own since there is no logical reason to have the buildings connected presently. It will be on the east side of the building where the different colored areas will be located, and where businesses could be noted by the color of the building, for example, the red building, the yellow building, etc.

The difficulty in the design work was caused by the depth of the space between the Main Street face and the inside area of the available space. Main Street is the most obvious space but the other sides of the building have importance for the vitality of the project. Looking at the north side of the property, there is a side yard between the property and Market Square. It's now pretty much dirt on a slope, not inviting. Plans are to open up with glass, to provide a wide open space involving light and landscaping, and providing paving and a secure area. This will enable smaller stores and businesses to have an area where they would be part of the project, but not making it necessary for them to have a large space.

There have been approaches made to rent spaces in the building, but those requests have been rebuffed since presently the owners are looking to have the building to have some type of a theme, looking to have this evolve into a health and wellness type building where the occupants of the spaces are loosely connected to that concept and they can help each other. Plan A. is to have this space evolve into a health and wellness building where the occupants of the spaces are somewhat connected to each other. In general an accomplishment would be to have a center that is wholesome for family activities.

There will be a very wide central corridor to be lit with glass doors facing into the corridor from the areas located to the side and will enable people to have access without paying the rents that might be required if located and accessed directly from Main Street. This building should be less expensive to occupy than space on the Berlin Turnpike.

The southwest side of the building has many elevation changes and it is necessary because of the American Disability Act that people can access this side of the building via a ramp. This would provide access from the main parking lot on the south. Work has already started on some demolition of the office space on Main Street and also some environmental abatement. There are ceilings that are about fifteen feet high with an attractive wood strip ceiling which will be maintained into a rough industrial heritage of the building.

The south side of the building is about 35,000 feet of space so a large amount of glass doors will lighten the side, and be useful for retail and showrooms. The space in between the warehouse and the main building, the eastern side of the main building, will be broken into spaces and subspaces by the use of color. The access points have changed by making them very very bright light industrial space. This area should be available for vans to load and unload in a reasonable size space.

Each side of the building will have its own identity, personality, and function. Hopefully the occupants will be local businesses.

Inside, the corridor will be 20 feet wide, a white oak floor and facing into it will be interior store fronts. There will be flexibility in the size of the interior units, and because of the size of the corridor smaller retail space will also be available. If there is no supply problem or problems with the plans, possible occupancy could be scheduled for the third or fourth quarter of this year. Work has started and marketing is also commencing and as soon as the demolition is completed work will begin on the north.

Commissioner Havens questioned if the presentation would be available on line to give a larger picture of the interior of the building. The plans will be available on the You Tube channel.

The developer defined his interpretation of health and well being as related to art, philosophy, education, physical well being not an urgent care health medical facility. There are no signed leases at this time, but the development hopefully will attract the type of businesses that the developer feels would incorporate the feeling of health and wellness.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kathy Freeman, 87 Centerwood Road: Happy that improvements are being made to the building, and questioned that some of the spaces seemed to be very large compared to the spaces presently available on Main Street and the center buildings, and questioned if there would be a minimum space available for rent. The developer responded that smaller areas take a large management task if the areas are really fragmented and interested occupants now are looking at between 12,000 square feet and 1100 square feet, with the average ground floor being four to five thousand square feet as you move further into the building. The southern side of the building will be smaller, 3,500 or 3,000 square feet.

Kathy LaPierre, 23 Saddle Hill Circle: Reiterated that people are looking for 2,000 square feet, and that nothing has been said about food or beverage establishments. The developer replied that plans for a brewery had been presented initially but did not materialize, but that certainly would be an avenue that they would be looking to develop to attract people to the venue. The northern area of the building would be available for outdoor seating and should be attractive to restaurant looking to establish themselves in the building.

Deanne Reeney, 110 Grandview Drive: Has a business on the Berlin turnpike now and is

looking to have this project change the downtown for the better and this will create a larger option for more small businesses to come downtown. This would be a great health care facility, featuring a nail salon, a massage studio, and businesses of that type for self health.

Gail Budrejko, 21 Isabelle Terrace: Very happy with the presentation and the plans as presented. Suggested that the developer set aside one room that can be rented out to the members of the community for meetings, displays, community events, etc. Requested that the colors of the colored building be of a muted hue.

Jeff Rodriques, 1307 Main St: Pleased to see the redevelopment and the removal of the façade. Suggested that bike racks and bike access be considered as well.

Jenna Morganthal, 17 Harris: Pleased with the project as presented and was interested in how the developer would relate to the businesses who would be renting the area space.

Peter Hoffman, Francis Avenue: Questioned if the developer tried to give a variety of square footage that would be available to the businesses, and also if the ceiling area in the main area would be left open or sealed off. The area will remain as an open industrial look area. Suggested that the color palate for the east buildings be reconsidered.

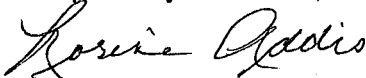
Commissioner Havens questioned if a drive through restaurant would be considered for the building and the traffic pattern of the site would make that very difficult although because it is the PD zone, it is allowable, but not in the plans.

The members of the Commission expressed appreciation to Mr. Stillman for his presentation and also the time and energy expended in making the renovations to the building acceptable to the area.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Havens moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Norine Addis,
Recording Secretary