

NEWINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

October 4, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Teresa Avey called the October 4, 2023 regular meeting of the Newington Economic Development Commission to order at 7:20 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present

Chairman Teresa Avey
Commissioner Meri Beatrice
Commissioner Dana Havens
Commissioner Jerilyn Nagel
Commissioner Paul Lenzi

Commissioners Absent

Commissioner Marissa Lenzi-excused
Commissioner Skip Stamm

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NEWINGTON, CT
2023 OCT 10 AM 11:45
Adrian O. Higgins
Town Clerk

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Havens moved to accept the minutes of the September 6, 2023 regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nagal. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion with five voting YEA.

V. TOWN MANAGER REPORT

No information

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

VII. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT

Chairman Avey reported that the Waterfall Festival scheduled for this coming Saturday was cancelled due to the forecast of inclement weather again.

Commissioner Nagel reported that it might be scheduled for April 2024.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Beautification Committee

No additional information

Chairman Avey reported that last month the EDC did their first ribbon cutting ceremony at Evolutions and Wellness on Market Square, Council members and members of the EDC Commission were present to welcome the owners into the community who appreciated the support from those attending.

Commissioner Beatrice introduced Michelle McKee who was present representing Connecticut Main Street in the hope of improving the downtown center district and thanked Council member Radda and Representative Turco for their assistance in giving their expertise in communities such as Newington and addressed what types of things the Commission should be working on, how can the downtown business district be improved, and the additional information that Ms McKee could furnish to the Commission.

Michelle McKee is the executive director of Connecticut Main Street that for twenty-five years has been providing communities across the state, no matter the size, the resources they might need to establish a vibrant and successful center.

Any community, regardless of the size, needs a successful downtown and must be ready to respond to the changes that occur in the downtown area, businesses and buildings. Main Streets should be able to adapt to all of the changes.

Used successfully, Connecticut Main Street stresses the four point approach; basically it is four categories of activity that happen on Main Street that need to be managed. The best Main Streets and downtown areas have a designated entity, any kind of entity such as a downtown Commission to a nonprofit, to special services district, business improvement district but the most successful Main Streets are ones that have an entity that focuses on only the Main Street.

The four points are; organization, and that is basically that management structure, do they have a team of directors, volunteers, how are they managing the process of all of the participants in the main street businesses.

The second bucket is design, that is basically everything that you see on that Main Street. Ease of mobility, cleanliness, planters, facades, everything that you see.

The third bucket is economic vitality and that is all about how healthy your economy is in that section of town, what is your building inventory, your vacancies, the kinds of businesses that you have.

Finally, the fourth bucket, promotion. How is the downtown area positioned and how is it being marketed? Is there use of social media to promote the downtown area, easily understandable?

When all of the four points are used in conjunction with the planning of the downtown promotion of the downtown area will become easier.

All of the programming from Connecticut Main Street, all of the services offered are revolving around the four points to help communities use and implement those practices. Members get a visit from Carl Rosa who brings with him a 86 point assessment tool. This assessment tool is a series of questions all related to the four points that are scored. With this are a list of action items, from most important, to this would be nice to have and think about this, and this is the tool for creating an annual plan or strategic plan of action. The assessment is done every year so progress would be measurable.

Educational training opportunities are offered throughout the year to members, webinars on a variety of improvements that can be implemented in a downtown area.

Commissioner Beatrice remarked that some progress has already been made in a couple of areas, beautification and redevelopment, particularly in the Keeney building.

Commissioner Nagel questioned if Connecticut Main Street works with the Chamber of Commerce and Ms. McKeen indicated that they do work with the Chamber when events are scheduled in the different communities. There are a couple of differences between the two programs; the Chamber is a member driven organization and the members are not always based on Main Street, and Main Street is not just businesses, but can be an advocate for the eco system as a whole.

The yearly membership charge is dependent on the size of the community and Newington would probably fall into the \$1500 category.

Connecticut Main Street does keep communities abreast of grant opportunities as they arise, but are not involved with the actual grant writing, opportunities for grants are regularly posted in the newsletter to members and will also respond to specific requests. Connecticut Main Street has a professional affiliate network that can be used as a referral should a community request a specific area to be upgraded, such as lighting, etc.

Commissioner Lenzi questioned the number of years the town would be locked in for membership and Ms. McGee indicated that it is a annual membership, so you can renew every year that you want to. Some towns have been members for over ten years and towns like Simsbury, Windsor, Torrington have been long time members and there is about an 85 percent retention rate among members.

Erik Hinckley asked to have information on some of the towns approximately the same size as Newington as to what the changes/improvements have been in those towns sent to the Commission members to evaluate. Ms McGee will send a list of the towns that they have worked with, and the contact person so that information can be reviewed by the Commission.

Chairman Avey voiced her appreciation for the presentation and indicated that the Commission would discuss and determine if this is something that they can or would like to do. Once the information requested has been received the Commission members it can be moved this to Old

Business for discussion next month. She will check with the Finance Department about how much money is in the budget for EDC.

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kim Radda requested that she be included in the distribution of information when received, and since she is the liaison to the Council from EDC she will discuss this situation and people would be interested and excited about this possibilities that may exist.

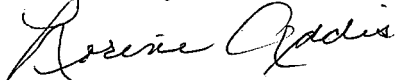
X. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None

XI. ADJOURN

Commissioner Havens moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lenzi. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Norine Addis,
Recording Secretary