**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP**
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING**
**Wednesday, February 17, 2016**
**Nash-Zimmer Transportation Center**
**23 Royce Circle**
**1st Floor**

**4:00 PM**

# MINUTES

Present: Steve Bacon, Tom Callahan, Matt Hart, Riley Hasson, George Jones, Mike Kirk, June Krisch, Philip Lodewick, Bonnie Kumiega, Shamim Patwa, Diana Pelletier, Steve Rogers, Paul Shapiro, and Bill Simpson

Board Member Emeritus: Betsy Paterson

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm

Guests: Francine Christiansen with Christiansen Consulting, and Bruce Silva, Superintendent of Region 19 School District (E.O. Smith High School)

## 1. Call to Order

President Philip Lodewick called the meeting to order at 4:03 pm.

Guests Francine Christiansen and Bruce Silva, and Board members and staff introduced themselves.

## 2. Opportunity for Public to Comment

There was no public comment.

## 3. E.O. Smith High School Outreach Efforts and Renovation Update – Bruce Silva, Region 19 Superintendent

Bruce Silva passed out pamphlets about E.O. Smith High School to the Board. He said the High School hired a consultant last year to help with their branding efforts. There is a great amount of pride in the High School and the goal was to promote that pride as well as show the opportunities at the High School, particularly for other towns whose students can opt into the High School.

Mr. Silva said last year, several parents approached the Region 19 School Board regarding issues with the auditorium in terms of lack of storage and acoustics. The School Board hired a consultant team to look at needs in this area as well as the agricultural education programs.

A final report was submitted to the High School Building Committee and then the Board. It initially included three options, two of which would be renovation and one which was to demolish the High School and build a new high school where the current parking lot is located. The parking lot would be moved behind the school.

The Building and Grounds Committee then posed a 4th option to build a high school in a different location. Could UConn be interested in swapping some space?

Mr. Silva noted that in 1998 the High School was renovated which added 110,000 square feet. The cost was approximately $30 million. The rest of the High School dates to 1956.

He said the cost of a new high school at a different site is estimated to be approximately $35 million after the state reimbursement. This would compare favorably with the estimated costs for renovation, and building a high school to the property line on Storrs Road.

On behalf of the School Board, Mr. Silva wrote to UConn to see if they were interested in a conversation about the High School and they replied in the affirmative.

Shamim Patwa asked how an offsite location would work for High School students who walk to UConn for classes. Mr. Silva said he expected that UConn could run shuttles and/or students could drive.

Matt Hart asked about the approval process if a decision was made to pursue a new high school on UConn land. When could the Partnership Board weigh in? Mr. Silva said there would be a public hearing and various other public meetings.

Mr. Silva said while there are benefits to being located downtown, one of the issues is the frequent parade of people, not associated with the High School, walking across their property. It becomes a security issue.

Betsy Paterson asked about the state reimbursement rate. Mr. Silva said it is approximately 70 percent. The cost to move the High School is approximately $120 million so the cost would be approximately $36 million after reimbursement.

Mr. Silva emphasized that moving the High School would only happen if it was a beneficial deal for the High School.

**4. Approval of Minutes of January 7, 2016**

Diana Pelletier made a motion to approve the minutes of January 7, 2016. Steve Bacon seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

## 5. Executive Director Report

Cynthia van Zelm reported that the Oaks is almost fully leased for the lease period starting in August. The Oaks is approximately two months ahead of where they have been in previous years. She said LeylandAlliance held an open house on February 6 to look at two of the townhomes in Main Street Homes. Approximately 50 people attended. Twenty-nine of the 42 homes have been sold. The first town homes in Main Street Homes should be ready for its owners in March.

With respect to business tenants, Tea More Café and NICABM are expected to open in mid-March. A tentative date for Salt and Pearl are April 1 and a tentative date for Katmandu Kitchen is May 1.

Ms. van Zelm said the Town Council has approved ordinances related to alcohol use, dog waste, and the Town Square. The Ordinance Review Subcommittee continues to work on policies and procedures for the Town Square and is meeting monthly.

Ms. van Zelm said she has reached out to the UConn Honors College for a student Board representative to take Riley Hasson's place as Ms. Hasson will graduate in May.

Ms. van Zelm said the Partnership is applying for two awards for the Town Square.

She said Partnership staff Kathleen Paterson and Dee Goodrich will update the Board on March 3 on some of the projects they are working on for the Partnership.

## 6. Report from Committees

<u>Advertising and Promotion</u>

In Chair Toni Moran's absence, Ms. van Zelm said the Committee is continuing to review its charge vis a vis the work that will commence on the strategic plan.

<u>Business Development and Retention</u>

Chair Steve Rogers said the Committee met last week and visited Gansett Wraps. The Committee met with the owner Bahaa Mahmoud and was given a tour.

Mr. Rogers said the Committee also stopped in at Think It Drink It.

The Committee also discussed revisiting its charge at the next meeting.

Ms. Paterson asked if businesses serve on the Committee. Ms. Roger replied in the affirmative and said one of the Committee's objectives is to reconnect with downtown businesses to update businesses on what the Committee is doing and let them know that the Committee is a resource for them.

Finance and Administration

Chair Tom Callahan said that the Committee did not meet.

Membership Development

Chair George Jones said the Committee did not meet last month.

He updated the Board on the status of renewals. He said 136 members have renewed this year for a total of $8,255. The Partnership had 248 members in 2015. A 2nd letter will go out in early March. He encouraged all Board members to renew.

He said the Committee also sent letters to the downtown businesses and realtors in town who are not currently members.

Planning and Design

Chair Steve Bacon said the Committee met with UConn Associate Professor Kristin Schwab and her students to review their initial design work on the public areas in Storrs Center. They are well underway with design. He said the areas of focus are the courtyard between Dunkin Donuts and Brueggers; the two courtyards on Wilbur Cross Way; the courtyard between Mooyahs and Geno's; and the triangular planting area across from Educational Playcare.

Mr. Bacon said it was a great presentation and ideas included plantings, seating, art, etc. Ms. Paterson agreed that the ideas were very thoughtful and creative.

Mr. Bacon said the next step is to have a meeting with key stakeholders including the Board.

Mr. Bacon also mentioned that there will need to be a Partnership public hearing on the trail leading from Main Street Homes to Whetten Woods. An easement will also be needed.

**7. Executive Director Evaluation**

Mr. Lodewick said it is time for Executive Director van Zelm's evaluation and asked that forms be returned by April 1.

**8. Discussion of Partnership Strategic Plan with Francine Christiansen of Christiansen Consulting**

Francine Christiansen introduced herself and went through a Power Point presentation. She said her background included working as an executive director, serving on boards, and fundraising.

She said key for the process is to articulate the value of the Partnership.

Ms. Christiansen said the strategic plan should be an active document and part of every Board meeting.

She said the difference for Storrs Center from other downtowns is that there was never a time when there was not a group/staff overseeing Storrs Center (the Partnership). Ms. Christiansen said, in her experience, oversight by a manager is critical.

Ms. Christiansen said she is in the middle of her research and developing a situational analysis.

She believes the Partnership has a lot of internal work to do before the planning process is brought to the larger community.

She reviewed the timeline with the Board. The goal is to have a plan to present to the membership in September.

Ms. Christiansen asked Board members to fill out the questionnaire about the Partnership and its future. A hard copy was passed out and an electronic copy will be sent after the meeting.

One of the key outcomes of the strategic planning process will be how to measure success.

Ms. Patwa asked how the Town's Mansfield Tomorrow Plan fits into the Partnership's strategic plan. She said the connectedness between plans will be important. Ms. van Zelm said she has sent a link to the Mansfield Tomorrow Plan to Ms. Christiansen.

Bill Simpson asked if UConn's Master Plan should also be reviewed. Mike Kirk said he would assist Ms. Christiansen with accessing the Master Plan.

Mr. Callahan said the former Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (precursor to Mansfield Tomorrow) called for the development of the Storrs Center area. The goal now is to enhance, protect, and preserve the downtown. The ties to the aforementioned plans are not as relevant now.

Ms. Paterson said it is important to ensure that visitors come back again and again.

Mr. Jones said it will be key to plan for the summer when Mansfield is not as busy.

Mr. Lodewick said the Partnerships is transitioning to a management role. The support of the Town and UConn will be key going forward. Mr. Kirk agreed that it will be important to review the Partnership's role in ensuring the downtown is successful.

Ms. Christiansen said the role of convener has been brought up to describe one of the Partnership's roles going forward. Advocacy will be important as well.

Ms. van Zelm said not all issues will be solved through the strategic planning process; the goal will be to set up the best governance structure to address issues.

## 9. Correspondence and Communications

Ms. van Zelm noted two items in the Board's correspondence. She referred to a letter from Bonnie Kumiega noting her potential conflict of interest as required by the Partnership's conflict of interest policy.

Ms. van Zelm also referred to Mr. Hart's Town Manager's report and Town Attorney Kevin Deneen's opinion on the process to add the manufacture of beer to the Town's list of permitted uses.

Mr. Hart said the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Economic Development Commission is reviewing the steps to add the manufacture of beer as a permitted use. Mr. Deneen has noted that it will require a vote of the residents in a referendum. Ten percent of the registered voters must vote in the affirmative. Mr. Hart said someone could put together a petition to achieve the required signatures to place this on a referendum.

Mr. Callahan asked who would be responsible for developing an ordinance if the approval is granted. Mr. Hart said the Town Council would need to approve the manufacture of beer in an ordinance. The Planning and Zoning Commission would create requisite regulations.

Mr. Hart said he would outline the detailed process to the Board at a future meeting.

## 10. Adjourn

Mr. Rogers made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved and the meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.

*Minutes taken by Cynthia van Zelm.*