

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: Chair S. Ferrigno, L. Aldrich, K. Dilaj, N. McKenney, L. Watson

Members Absent: A. Raggi, V. Souter-Kline

Ex-Officio Members Present: B. Coleman, A. Moran

Ex-Officio Members Absent: None

Staff Present: R. Aylesworth, Town Manager; J. Kaufman, Acting Director of Planning and Development; C. van Zelm, Executive Director, Mansfield Downtown Partnership; J. Stern, Administrative Assistant, Mansfield Downtown Partnership

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Ferrigno called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

New Commission member Lucy Aldrich, returning members, and staff introduced themselves.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

In the fifth paragraph of item 5B, Subcommittee Updates, Coleman noted that “398 acres” should be changed to “398 units.”

McKenney MOVED, Dilaj SECONDED to approve the May 19, 2022 minutes with the above change. Motion PASSED unanimously.

4. REPORTS

A. MEMBER UPDATES

No report.

B. Staff Updates

Van Zelm said the Taste of Mansfield partners meeting has been rescheduled to June 23 and will be a virtual meeting. A trip to Spring Valley Farm might be scheduled for the fall or next year.

Van Zelm said the inaugural Business Digest was sent out. This email newsletter will go out monthly and contain information on upcoming webinars and other business-related events. The first issue also contained the application for the ARPA Local Small Business Assistance program.

Van Zelm recognized McKenney for the awards she and her business, Hops 44, recently received.

Van Zelm said the networking event for the Downtown businesses will take place next Wednesday evening at Hops 44. The members of the EDC, Town Council, and Planning and Zoning Commission are invited as well. So far, 22 people, most of them business owners, have said they will attend. In response to a question from Moran, van Zelm said the businesses at Mansfield Four Corners were not invited as the event is related to the strategies in the Downtown Storrs Strategic Action Plan. Moran

said an event should be held for other Mansfield businesses in the future. Ferrigno agreed and said this event will serve as a trial run for future networking events.

C. Business Updates (Openings/Closings)

Dilaj said Alex Salustri has sold Chiropractic Health Center. Fashion Nails & Spa, in the Big Y plaza, has expanded into the space next door.

D. Housing Updates

Kaufman displayed the story map on the Town website, which tracks current development applications in Mansfield and shows their locations. She highlighted the current application for a Mixed Use Center-Transition district near Four Corners, as well as The Standard, whose developers are hoping to break ground this fall. In addition, an application for a wetlands permit as part of a proposal to add 102 residential units and some retail space to the parcel where TOAST and Pizza Mike's are located will be received July 5 by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Ferrigno referenced an application from Domino's to open up a branch at Four Corners. Kaufman said a public hearing will be held on this application on July 5, and the location would have a pickup window but no indoor or outdoor seating, so it would not be considered a restaurant. It would be located in the vacant building next to Dick's Auto Care.

In response to a question from Ferrigno, Kaufman said there are still many details to be sorted out before construction begins on The Standard. She thinks construction is expected to last until 2025.

Ferrigno said the Development Project Review Subcommittee will work on a letter from the EDC regarding the proposed Mixed Use Center-Transition application. The public hearing for this application is scheduled for July 5 and will likely be extended to July 18. Kaufman said all comments must be received prior to when the public hearing closes.

E. EDC Calendar

There are no significant updates.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS AT MEETING

A. Discussion of Co-Working Space

Ferrigno said the possibility of co-working space has been discussed for years and recently came up again at the annual meeting of the Downtown Partnership Board. Van Zelm said she spoke recently with Patrick McMahon of Windsor and Anissa Teich of Bromleigh Ventures about their recent initiatives in South Windsor and West Hartford. She outlined several of Teich's recommendations, including that co-working space should be built in an already established, walkable area. Many potential clients are working remotely but looking for their own space to work away from their homes. Van Zelm also mentioned co-working spaces in Manchester and Wallingford. She plans to continue researching the concept and possibly organize a site visit or an opportunity for Teich to meet with the Commission.

Commission members asked van Zelm to elaborate on what model of co-working space she has in mind. Moran said that when the new elementary school opens, the Vinton and Goodwin buildings might be a possible location for co-working space if it is determined that they do not need to be demolished. Van Zelm made the distinction between incubator space (which may be a fit for the schools) and co-working space. In response to a comment from Moran about the collapse of WeWork, van Zelm said Teich had drawn a distinction between co-working space as part of economic and community development versus as a real estate venture.

The Commission discussed the possibility of co-working space. Several members expressed interest in surveying the community to gauge how much interest there is. Questions were also asked about what kinds of fees the space would charge and whether it could sustain itself. Moran expects that UConn students would not be major users of a co-working space.

B. Update on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Local Small Business Assistance Proposal

Aylesworth said the \$370,000 program was approved by the Town Council, and he expects most funding packages to be between \$2,500 and \$5,000. The application has been open for one week and will remain open until July 8. Van Zelm said about five businesses had expressed interest when the program was initially announced. The application is being promoted through emails, press releases, and social media posts. Aylesworth said there have been discussions about putting together a review committee to assist the Partnership staff with reviewing applications.

Coleman asked whether the application window is long enough. Van Zelm said no applications have been received yet, but her experience is that most applications tend to come in close to the deadline. Aylesworth said that a one-month window is seen as ideal by other communities that have organized similar programs. A second round of applications will be considered if not many are received.

Aylesworth and Ferrigno thanked van Zelm for her efforts in organizing the program.

C. Subcommittee Updates

Ferrigno said the Business Outreach Subcommittee has been reviewing a list of businesses to visit and interview. Anthony Raggi has expressed interest in joining this subcommittee. Ferrigno reviewed the missions of the subcommittees for Aldrich so she may choose which one she wants to join.

There were no updates from the Development Project Review or Governance subcommittees.

D. Town/UConn Collaboration Update

Moran said the Town University Relations Committee met last week and reviewed UConn's and the Town's development plans. UConn's planned projects include building new dormitories and renovating existing ones, as well as demolishing the Mansfield Apartments. She said the relationship with UConn continues to be cordial.

Moran said Aylesworth has also been negotiating a renewal of the sewer agreement, which expires on June 30. Ferrigno noted that a new agreement could increase the viability of potential developments on King Hill Road.

Ferrigno said that at the annual meeting of the Partnership Board, tours were provided of the Innovation Partnership Building (IPB). While on the tour, he asked several people how the Town can help support the IPB and its efforts, and multiple people suggested catering or delivery food services. Moran said she thinks UConn Dining Services still has complete control over food service on campus, preventing outside caterers from providing their services there.

Ferrigno also said that when he staffed the Downtown Partnership booth at UConn orientation, two families asked if there is a hotel near campus. Moran said she had expected there to be interest in building a hotel at Four Corners, but none has been proposed.

E. Promotion of Arts in Mansfield

Ferrigno said he and Coleman will meet soon to discuss promotion of arts in Mansfield.

Van Zelm said she and Partnership Event Coordinator Denise Kegler recently met with Anne D'Alleva, UConn's Dean of Fine Arts and Interim Provost, and Alain Frogley, Interim Dean of Fine Arts. They

discussed the possibility of using some of the Downtown Storrs buildings to host UConn classes or showcase student art. Kegler has drafted an overview of increased involvement by the Partnership and the Town in the arts with a variety of partners including the UConn School of Fine Arts.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

All noted.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

A. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 21, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

B. Future Meeting Topics

No future meeting topics were discussed.

8. ADJOURNMENT

McKenney MOVED, Dilaj SECONDED to adjourn. Motion PASSED unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Joshua Stern
Administrative Assistant
Mansfield Downtown Partnership, Inc.