

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: Chair S. Ferrigno, C. Chukwuogor, K. Dilaj, V. Souter-Kline, L. Watson

Member Absent: D. Fecho, A. Raggi

Ex-Officio Member Present: A. Moran

Ex-Officio Member Absent: B. Shaiken

Staff Present: C. van Zelm, Executive Director, Mansfield Downtown Partnership, and L. Painter, Director of Planning and Development, Town of Mansfield

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Ferrigno called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

New Economic Development Commission (EDC) members Kristin Dilaj and Valessa Souter-Kline and current EDC members introduced themselves.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Watson MOVED, Chukwuogor SECONDED to approve the July 15, 2021 and August 19, 2021 regular meeting Minutes as presented. Motion PASSED unanimously.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS AT MEETING

A. Review of Development Guidelines for Endorsement of Projects and Business Proposals

Watson said the EDC had previously developed development criteria for review of projects to determine if the EDC would support a particular project, mainly through a letter of support to the Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC).

Watson said he and van Zelm worked on revising the development criteria to refer to them as development guidelines as not all the guidelines needed to be met to indicate a sign of support for a project. The draft guidelines also refer to the economic development goals in the Mansfield Tomorrow document.

Chukwuogor MOVED, Watson SECONDED to accept the Development Guidelines for Endorsement of Projects and Business Proposals. Motion PASSED unanimously.

B. Sales and Cultivation of Cannabis

Painter said the CT State Legislature recently approved the retail sale of cannabis this past summer. At that time, the PZC adopted a nine-month moratorium (until March 21, 2022) on cannabis

establishments so the PZC would have time to review the new legislation and develop appropriate regulations.

In September of this year, the PZC's Regulatory Review Committee developed a framework for the discussion of regulations (PZC jurisdiction) and an ordinance (Town Council jurisdiction). The PZC is seeking feedback from various advisory committees. The PZC and the Town Council are expected to review draft regulations and an ordinance amendment respectively in November.

Retail sales of cannabis would be regulated by the PZC. Of interest to the EDC would be that there are no host communities in Connecticut, instead towns in Connecticut receive three percent of receipts. The funds are limited to streetscape improvements where a cannabis retailer is located, educational programs, services for people on probation for cannabis, etc. For the first 30 days of opening, a municipality can recoup public safety or service costs of up to 50 percent.

If ten percent of registered voters petition whether to allow sales, the issue can be put to referendum.

The PZC looked at different types of facilities. Painter indicated that the PZC might want to prohibit cultivators. The main concern is odor. If the PZC would consider allowing cultivators, they would be likely looking at allowing that use in the Planned Business 1, Planned Business 3, or Institutional zones (East Brook Mall area, Four Corners, UConn and Town Hall fall into these zones). If the PZC wants to pursue allowing a cultivator, they would want to visit a cultivator.

Ferrigno asked why cultivators would not be potentially designated in less dense area. Painter said cultivation would need to be in an enclosed facility with security, not an open field. The PZC would not want this type of use allowed in neighborhoods.

With respect to dispensaries, if the PZC considered allowing dispensaries, they would likely be in the Planned Business 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 zones, or the Storrs Center- Special Design District (East Brook Mall area, Four Corners, Downtown Storrs, and Perkins Corners fall into these zones). An appointment would be needed to visit a dispensary. If the dispensary is in an existing building it could be approved "by right"; if it is a new building, site plan approval would be needed.

Retailers and hybrid retailers (medical and recreational) are potentially proposed in the Planned Business 1, 3, 4, and 5 zones (East Brook Mall area, Four Corners, King Hill Board, Perkins Corner would fall into these zones). A special permit would be required with a public hearing. The PZC is seeking input from the EDC and the Mansfield Downtown Partnership Board of Directors whether retailers should be allowed in the Downtown Storrs area. Some of the questions raised by the PZC Regulatory Review Committee are whether retailers should be located near schools and childcare facilities. The hours contemplated would be the same as liquor stores.

Mansfield is allowed one retailer and one micro cultivator until 2023 or 2024. There is no limit on a hybrid retailer or dispensaries.

The PZC wants to prohibit home based businesses related to cannabis.

Moran asked about whether delivery services would be allowed to deliver cannabis to homes. Painter said the PZC cannot prohibit someone from delivering cannabis to a residence.

Ferrigno asked what feedback is desired. Painter said the PZC is looking for feedback in general. Does it make sense to allow the sale in commercial districts with a special permit?

Moran asked if UConn could open a retail location on campus. Painter said she would need to follow-up to see if allowed on State property.

Chukwuogor asked how the Town could disallow the various uses for cannabis. Painter said the state law gave municipalities the ability to say if they would not want to allow retail sales.

Ferrigno suggested no position tonight, will need to reflect on what the EDC has heard.

Souter-Kline asked how many stores are hybrid retailers in Massachusetts. Painter said she did not know. She is not sure the license requirements are the same in Connecticut as Massachusetts.

Souter-Kline asked if there are any current proposals on the table. Painter replied in the negative.

Souter-Kline asked if the three percent revenue is a significant number. Painter said she does not know what gross proceeds are for the sale.

Souter-Kline asked if any delivery services are authorized to deliver cannabis to homes. Painter does not know if the CT Consumer Protection Agency has decided on any regulations or licensing process yet.

Chukwuogor asked if the Town stipulates the records a retail establishment must keep regarding gross receipts. Painter said a business has to report their gross receipts to the State on a monthly basis. The State will then will notify the Town about the gross receipts. Within a certain time period, the Town invoices the establishment for the percentage it should receive.

Chukwuogor asked if the EDC should invite in experts that know more about the benefits of cannabis. Moran said the Town has already approved medical marijuana facility. The revenue to the Town cannot be ignored.

Ferrigno said the cannabis discussion will be added to the November EDC agenda.

C. Haven Communities, LLC Revised Proposal (The Standard at Four Corners)

Painter said a public hearing is scheduled for November 15 on a resubmission of Haven's mixed-use project. The project had been put on hold due to an appeal by UConn of the PZC wetlands license. UConn has since dropped its appeal.

Painter will send a link of the story map page from the PZC website that highlights the proposed project.

Painter said the amount of housing and commercial development will remain the same (including 398 units, 15,000 square feet of commercial development and six story parking garage). The main change is with respect to affordable housing. Haven's original proposal was to provide a fee to the Town in lieu of providing affordable housing units on site. The new proposal will be to provide ten percent of units of affordable housing at 80 percent of median income and five percent of affordable housing at 120 percent of median income.

Painter said the EDC would need to provide any comments by the public hearing date of November 15.

Watson said the Water System Advisory Committee is seeking times to schedule a meeting to discuss the Haven project. Has the Town designated any more members on the Committee? Painter said there have been no more appointments yet. Watson is concerned about making sure there is full Mansfield representation on the Committee.

Ferrigno said the Water System Advisory Committee includes representatives from UConn, Willington, Coventry, Willimantic, Tolland, and Mansfield and serves to advise CT Water on hooks ups for development projects. He would welcome any of the new members serving if interested. Painter said Mansfield reps include an EDC representative, a Conservation Commission representative, and an at-large member.

D. Town/UConn Collaboration Update

Ferrigno updated the EDC on the J.E. Shepard/Capstone housing project that was proposed at Four Corners. UConn bought the property preventing the housing development, which caused concern from the Town and some members of the community.

As a result of this action, there has been increased level of collaboration between UConn and the Town of Mansfield, spearheaded by Mansfield Mayor Toni Moran and interim UConn President Andrew Agwunobi. A framework for review of development projects will be developed.

Moran provided a few other updates. UConn withdrew legal objections of the Haven project.

Moran said there are separate water agreements between UConn and CT Water and the Town and CT Water. With respect to sewer, there is an agreement between the Town and UConn on sewer service. There is a proposal to redevelop Mansfield Apartments as UConn housing and renovate some dorms on campus to address the on-going housing issues.

E. Small Business Saturday

Van Zelm said she and Ferrigno spoke about American Express' Small Business Saturday program. Businesses promote themselves through materials from Small Business Saturday.

The Partnership participated in the program for the last few years but there has been low response from businesses. Van Zelm said the effort has been hindered by the fact that there is not a lot of retail in Downtown Storrs to go store to store and chain stores in other parts of Mansfield are not eligible under the Small Business Saturday program.

Van Zelm suggested pivoting to a shop local campaign including promoting Winter Welcome in Downtown Storrs (coupons, specials) and promoting shopping local vs. on-line.

She asked for comments on the outlined proposal. Ferrigno supports trying new initiatives.

Painter said a prior EDC member who was a retailer asked EDC and Town Council members to shop local on Small Business Saturday, serving as small business ambassadors.

Chukwuogor asked why the EDC was not involved/aware of Winter Welcome and assisting small businesses.

Moran asked if Chukwuogor thought EDC members should be involved in doing the work of Small Business Saturday or shop local. Chukwuogor said the EDC should at least be invited in the discussions to provide input on how the EDC can be more successful in supporting small businesses.

Chukwuogor suggested setting up a subcommittee to work on initiatives to support small businesses.

Moran asked van Zelm if some members from the EDC could work on the Winter Welcome event. Van Zelm said she would follow-up on ideas to include EDC members more directly in planning

Dilaj said she would be happy to help with Winter Welcome. It would be great to have booths with small businesses at the event. She would like to know what businesses are open. Van Zelm will send Dilaj a link to open businesses.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

A. MEMBER UPDATES

No report.

B. Staff Updates

Van Zelm said she and Painter would be presenting on planning and economic development at the Town's Local Government Academy next week.

C. Housing Updates

No report.

D. Business Updates (Closings/Opening)

Van Zelm reported on Eminence Ink opening in University Plaza.

Brooklyn Dumplings should open in December.

CHA closed about a month ago, looking to consolidate all their CT offices.

Ferrigno said College Pizza opened on Route 32 in the former Jamaican restaurant location.

E. EDC Calendar

There was no discussion on the calendar.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

All noted.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

A. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Next regular meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

B. Future Meeting Topics

Ferrigno will meet with staff to discuss future topics.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chukwuogor MOVED to adjourn. Dilaj SECONDED the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm

Respectfully submitted by:
Cynthia van Zelm
Executive Director
Mansfield Downtown Partnership