ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
MINUTES – Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 6, 2022, 5:00 P.M.
City Hall Council Chambers, City Hall

ATTENDEES: Mayor Caggiano, Council Member Thibeault, Commissioners Mills, Hick, Schmelder, Cyr, Rasmussen-Tuller, Goldwasser, Zammett

ABSENT: - - -

STAFF PRESENT: Justin Malley, Executive Director; Dawn Leger, Grants Administrator; David Sgro, Housing & Rehab Specialist; Andrew Armstrong, Assistant City Planner; Richard Lacey, Corporation Counsel

I. Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

II. Public Participation – There was no public participation.

III. **Commissioner Schmelder made a motion to accept the minutes of December 2, 2021, seconded by Commissioner Mills. All commissioners present voted in favor and the minutes were accepted.**

IV. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Goldwasser made a motion to file the Communications seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All present voted in favor and the motion passed.

Commissioner Goldwasser made a motion to file the Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All present voted in favor and the motion passed.

V. New Business

A. Policy Discussion: Centre Square

Justin opened the discussion about the Wheeler Health vote. Several commissioners expressed their disappointment with the vote. Comments included:

- There was an opportunity to find out via the liaison [council member] why the ECD was in favor of the project.
- One commissioner was not in favor initially but changed his mind after consideration of all the positives and negatives – would like the council members to rethink their decision.
- One commissioner acknowledged the concerns about taxes, sale cost of the lot and what the project would bring to the downtown, and acknowledged that it was a very difficult decision but believes that the project had merit.
- Disappointment that the councilors had the opportunity to reach out to the board members but did not hear from anyone.
- Wondered why the councilors did not ask the board for information.

Council Member Thibeault spoke about why she voted against the project and referred to the Plan of Conservation and Development which had input from a large section of the community. She also referred to a letter she received from Goman & York. She has been following the project for a while. This was mainly about the location and she remarked that some information was not shared.

She has also received a lot of direct input from community leaders. She thinks that another location can be found.

B. Policy Discussion: Remaining Grant Funds

Justin spoke about 2 companies which had been awarded downtown grants but had not received the maximum allowed in that program which is $60,000. Each of these companies have experienced growth. Could companies which do not apply for or take the maximum allowed apply for the remainder? Discussion.

Comments:

- In support but with parameters, for example – not within a year
- In support if needed to keep company in Bristol
- We had discussed a rule in the past about a company applying multiple times
    - Justin: we had discussed but it is OK for a new project

Commissioner Hick made a motion to allow Downtown Grant awardees the option to reapply for the difference between their initial Downtown Grant award, not including funding awarded for new employment, and the maximum Downtown Grant amount of $60,000 provided that:
1. The applicant reapplies no sooner than 12 (twelve) months from the first grant award date;
2. The applicant reapplies no later than 5 (five) years from the first grant award date.

Commissioner Goldwasser seconded motion. Commissioners discussed if there should be a time limit and for how long. **Commissioner Hick amended the motion to read:**
2. The applicant reapplies no later than 10 (ten) years from the first grant award date. Commissioner Goldwasser seconded the motion. All present voted in favor and the motion passed. Justin said that this could be put into the grant contract.

C. Board of Finance Request: Misc. Promotions

Commissioner Schmelder made a motion to approve a transfer of $2,000 from the ECD City Travel Reimbursement account to the ECD City Miscellaneous Promotions account and to forward to the Board of Finance for action. Council Member Thibeault seconded the motion, all present voted in favor and the motion passed.

D. Sessions Building Update

Justin reported that approximately $1,800 has been spent on dumpsters from the new funds available for the temporary maintenance of this site. An order for oil was placed today which will be approximately $6,000. There are 2 tenants presenting a challenge down from around 15 or so original tenants. Justin is currently working with one of them. Brian and Ray have done amazing work with the tenants. Justin has spoken with most of them.

Many of the tenants have left and some are in process of leaving and have provided a schedule. Only 2 have a challenge in providing a leaving date. Council Member Thibeault inquired what would happen if the last 2 tenants do not leave. According to City Attorney Richard Lacey the courts view a commercial forfeiture just as serious if not more than a residential forfeiture and it is the same process.

E. Project Status Updates

- KindCare: We will see construction this month. There will be a ribbon cutting on March 22 at 4 p.m.
- The New Parkside Café on North Main is now open.
- We are working with the owner of the Better Half building location for possibilities for this space as well as with the Haseltines.
- Tommy's Place has recently opened.
- DoubleTree's new building project is moving along

F. ARPA Update

There are three groups. Each group came up with criteria. The portal is open and there is a webinar that people can go to and they are working with the Chamber as well. Applications are coming in. Thy have a spreadsheet of projects and the consultants are advising if the applicant has a qualifying project or not. The applicants are being told right away if their project does not qualify and whether there is the possibility to amend it or if more information is needed. Sometimes information is missing so they can complete the application and resubmit.

We want to be sure there is a long lasting impact to the community. They are also looking at the sustainability. There will be a mailing to businesses. Applications need to be in by January 31 but funds can be allocated up to 2024.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Goldwasser advised that he always carries the board business cards with him just in case there is an opportunity – just a reminder to everyone.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Hick asked for an update on the horse farm. Mayor Caggiano advised that the project is getting closer to completion and that there are legalities to finalize. The closing should be soon. The sign is down. Demolition should be soon also.

VIII. Any Other Business

A. City Council Member Report

- Council Member Thibeault advised that this Saturday at 4 p.m. there is an Economic Training Session for councilors and it is open to everyone. This will be held in Council Chambers.

- Also on Saturday CCM is having new council member training from 9-3 (Newly Elected Day – Virtual)
- There will be an update from the State of CT on the West End project at the Public Works board meeting on January 20.
- Budgets are due this month.
- City Hall Update: - Mayor Caggiano
    - Looking at a March date for the move.
    - Temporary locations are the Court House and Webster Bank, and Parks is moving to High St.
    - Expect to be back in City Hall by October 2023.
    - Commissioner Schmelder asked that the public be well-informed about the move.
    - Most customer facing departments will be at Webster Bank.
    - Meeting spaces are fluid.

B. Policy Committee

Dawn Leger reported there will be a Zoom meeting for the CDBG applicants and non-profits about the application process on Monday, January 10. The Public Facilities applicants have to have David Sgro sign off on their project.

Commissioner Schmelder reported that there was a Policy Committee meeting and reps from St. Vincent DePaul attended and reviewed why they needed additional funds for their security system. Commissioner Hick reported that it will now be an upgradable system and will ensure there are no dead spots.

Commissioner Schmelder made a motion to approve a transfer request for $40,605 from the CDBG Professional Fees and Services Account 1044105-531000 to St. Vincent DePaul Pandemic account 1044105-585012 for the installation of a security system as described in a letter dated 12/01/2021; and to forward to the Board of Finance for action.

C. Downtown Committee

Commissioner Goldwasser reported there was a discussion about Centre Square with regard to Green Space and Parking and if there was flexibility on the grant for the green space. We want to make the area as marketable as possible.

Mayor Caggiano said that we will be talking to the State about the grant with regard to flexibility.

IX. Adjournment

Commissioner Rasmussen-Tuller made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All present voted in favor – meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Cooper,
Recording Secretary