

GUILFORD
Economic Development Commission
MINUTES
July 10, 2018
8:00 A.M.
Town Hall, second floor, Selectmen's Meeting Room

Commissioners: Chair Mark Wasserman, Vice Chair Theodore Sands, Michael Meisel, Wendy Dockray, Fran Paranto, Michael Orce, David Egan, Tracy Brent

Absent: Damian Gunningsmith

Town Officials: Brian McGlone, Economic Development Coordinator
Matthew Hoey, First Selectman
Kevin Geenty, Geenty Group Realtors

At 8:01 am, Chair Mark Wasserman called to order the regular meeting.

The Agenda was revised as follows :

Motion: Ted Sands moved to revise the Agenda order and move "7. New Business, Kevin Geenty, Commercial Real Estate in Guilford" to #2, seconded by David Egan.

Vote: Ted Sands, Michael Meisel, Wendy Dockray, Fran Paranto, Michael Orce, David Egan, Tracy Brent

7. New Business

• **Kevin Geenty, Commercial Real Estate in Guilford**

Business owner Kevin Geenty had been invited to address the commission regarding the current commercial real estate status in Guilford advising :

- On his background and experience in development over the last 30 years.
- He has seen a loss of commercial building and business in CT due to restrictive regulations and high taxes.
- The majority of college students have always left CT for better opportunities in other states.
- Mr. Geenty has not experienced issues with the Guilford zoning and building regulations because the EDC and Economic Development Coordinator are proactively working with commercial entities.

Discussion reviewed the public transportation issues in Guilford and the reasons employers may have difficulty attracting employees. Some include lower wages from local companies for

skilled trade school personnel and an increase in the number of trade schools in Connecticut and graduates seeking employment.

Upon request, Mr. Geenty suggested :

- to attract visitors and potential new residents would be to increase tourism, repair and replace tourist signage throughout Town and to emphasize the many facets of Town history.
- increase more commercially zoned land.
- Guilford needs assisted living and affordable housing which is included in other shoreline towns' economic development and land use plans.

Discussion continued on potential locations for housing and the many wetlands areas that can not be developed.

Chair Wasserman expressed appreciation to Mr. Geenty for his presentation.

- **First Selectman, Matthew Hoey, EDC Expectations**

First Selectman, Matt Hoey submitted a questionnaire for commissioners to answer and review. Questions included the role of EDC and Coordinator, defining objectives, strategies, tactics, measures of success, gaps in skills or tools, and reviewing benefits of living or opening business in Guilford.

Discussion included, yet not limited to, promoting new and existing businesses, creating a Guilford Business Plan answering "what does EDC want the Town to be now and in the future", provide public education on how EDC benefits the Town.

Review included :

- It would be best if Economic Development Coordinator Brian McGlone could work with Town Planner George Kral, the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC), the Plan of Conservation and Development and other Town departments.
- Currently, the EDC can provide recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and other departments yet would prefer to have authority to make final decisions on matters that impact zoning and EDC responsibilities.
- Hotel development is not possible until property is available near Route I-95.
- Further discussion is needed on procuring special permits through the PZC.

Chair Wasserman encouraged members to attend Design Review Committee (DRC) meetings and other Town commission meetings to educate themselves and understand the work of those agencies. The DRC is helpful in providing guidance for development.

Discussion questions include : How can EDC motivate the majority of residents to provide what their desire is for economic development ? A minority of residents voice their desires at commission meetings and news editorials. The PZC approval of the U-Haul company application to construct a building, also recommended by the EDC, is being appealed by a local contractor.

Discussion reviewed the proposed Disc Golf Course. Environmental and safety issues may cause the recently PZC approved course to be relocated from Peddlars Park to Bittner Park.

An increase in publicity is needed to alert residents to EDC projects. Also, a protocol is needed to make it easier for residents to submit their feedback and knowledge on a subject. This would provide EDC with information to assist in decisions especially the long term impact on residents and commercial business.

First Selectman Matthew Hoey requested that the EDC develop a "Why Guilford..." message for the community, relating the benefits and quality of life. This would encourage current and potential residents and commercial entities to live and participate in the town. (At 9:25 a.m, Mr. Hoey left the meeting.)

Approve minutes

Upon review,

Motion: Ted Sands moved to approve the June 5, 2018 minutes, seconded by Wendy Dockray.

*Vote: Carried - Sands, Meisel, Orce, Paranto, Dockray, Egan
Abstention - Tracy Brent (absent at June meeting)*

3. Economic Development Coordinator Report

Coordinator Brian McGlone had emailed the following report prior to this meeting. There was no further discussion.

U-Haul - PZC approved the project at their 6/6 meeting by a 5-2 vote, with some special conditions acceptable to U-Haul. The formal announcement appeared in the local papers on 6/14. On the last day of the 15 day period, appeal was filed with the Superior Court of New Haven. The Town PZC has not had many appeals like this so I am not exactly sure how the process roles out from here. No word yet from U-Haul on their intended plans moving forward.

The Mews - 14 unit condominium project on Route 1 West has restarted. It was temporarily halted as they worked out difficult financing arrangements.

Books and Wittle - Experiencing significant growth impacting their Guilford and North Branford locations. Met with their HR Director as a follow up to a previous meeting to introduce Rep. Sean Scanlon and Rob Michalik - CT DECD (Matt Hoey attended as well). B & W is having difficulty in finding and training many skilled positions to run their equipment. Like many manufacturers in the state, they are facing these challenges compounded by pay issues, transport, and affordable housing. Sean and Rob have connected B & W with the Dept. of Labor, who may be able to provide some work force, along with funding for recruitment and training costs.

New Business

Rock, Paper, Sista - Opened in the former Christian Science Reading Room on Whitfield Street. Ribbon cutting occurred 6/12 (I was out of town and not able to attend).

Java Hut - Opened in the former Perk on Church location.

Orange Theory Fitness - Opened in the CVS Plaza.

CT Lunch - Will be opening in the Village Walk Plaza where La Rosticceria was located.

Projects

Tourism signage and Parking lot projects : Due to other conflicts, I have fallen behind on these projects. Will jump start week of 7/16.

Free Keys - You may have noticed two pianos have been placed around Town (Green - corner of Boston and Whitfield and in front of the library). These are intended for the public's enjoyment to express themselves by either making and/or listening to music. They will remain in place until early September.

Christmas in Guilford - A group of local merchants want to surround The Green with shopping, food, music and lights, similar to what is experienced throughout Europe during their Christmas Markets period. Guilford's program would start on Nov. 30 (same night as tree lighting) and continue through Saturday and Sunday. A meeting with THS staff will occur on July 10 following our EDC meeting.

5. Chairman's Report

There was no new information to report.

6. Sub-Committee/Board Liaison Reports

- **Town Forum - (Gunningsmith, Paranto)**

There was no further information to report.

- **Town Profile on State Film Site (Meisel,Dockray)**

Discussion was tabled to the next meeting.

- **Land Acquisition Committee (Paranto)**

There was no new information to report.

- **Signage (Meisel, Egan)**

Discussion was tabled to the next meeting.

- **Parking (Sands, Paranto, Orce)**

Discussion was tabled to the next meeting.

7. New Business

- **First Selectman Matthew Hoey - EDC Expectations**

Discussion took place earlier in the meeting.

- **Kevin Geenty, Commercial Real Estate in Guilford**

Discussion took place earlier in the meeting.

8. Old Business

There was no further business to report.

9. Approval of Bills

Upon review,

Motion: Ted Sands moved to approve the Recording Secretary's, June invoice for \$69.00, seconded by Michael Meisel.

Vote: Carried - Unanimously

10. Adjournment

Motion: At 9:26 a.m., Michael Meisel moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ted Sands.

Vote: Carried - Unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Anderson Castellano
Recording Secretary