

BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

There was a special meeting of the Bloomfield Town Council held at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 1, 2023 via hybrid meeting format with Zoom Webinar virtual platform. The in-person location in Council Chambers, Bloomfield Town Hall, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT.

In-Person Attendance: Councilors Anthony C. Harrington, Chair (in at 6:45 p.m.), Joseph Merritt and Kenneth L. McClary and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council

Virtual Attendance: Stanley D. Hawthorne, Town Manager, Councilor Rickford Kirton and Justin LaFountain, Director of Building and Land Use

Absent was: Councilor C.F. Politis

Also in virtual attendance: Councilor Suzette DeBeatham-Brown (in at 7:00 p.m.)

Guest were: Denise Robidoux, Don Poland and Brad Senft, Goman & York Consultants (virtual)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion and Status Update on Potential Business Grant Programs

Mrs. Denise Robidoux of Goman & York Economic Development Consultants gave a brief status update regarding potential Business Grant programs.

Mrs. Robidoux stated that the Community Investment Fund (CIF) grants are pending with the State of Connecticut. Grants submitted in the amount of \$500,000 each were for the Lower Blue Hills Avenue – Housing Rehabilitation loans and Small Business grants or new start-up businesses and low business loans to businesses already in existence. In addition, the Community Challenge Grants will be opening soon, which are large grants of approximately \$5 million dollars for infrastructure projects (business improvements, economic development and redevelopment programs). The application deadline is May 2023 and the Town will review projects for grant possibilities under this program.

There was also an ensued discussion relative to the Eminent Domain process, grant programs and funding for potential property appraisals. If the Town were to obtain this property, the Town would consider all redevelopment opportunities. Currently, there are good faith negotiations occurring with the current property owner.

Mr. Goman outlined the process for a potential Eminent Domain action, if necessary. This process can be very lengthy and would take at least 3 years to finalize. The committee members inquired about the financial cost for this process. It was noted that approximately \$120,000 is required for the necessary property appraisals to develop a Municipal Master Plan.

Discussion and Status Update regarding the Development Agency

Mr. Justin LaFountain, Director of Building and Land Use gave a brief status update of the newly formed Development Agency. The committee elected their Chair, Bonnie Bercowetz and approved all meeting dates for the year. At their first meeting, the appraisal process for the Wintonbury Mall property was discussed and are awaiting three quotes. It was noted that the appraisals may take approximately 6-7 weeks to be completed. They also briefly discussed maintenance costs and responsibilities of the current owner.

The next Development Agency meeting will be March 14, 2023 at 8:30 a.m.

Discussion regarding Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts

Mr. LaFountain mentioned the creation of a TIF Advisory Committee when each of the districts were created, Lower Blue Hills Avenue, Town Center and Tobey/Granby Street area. The TIF Advisory Committee is comprised of 7 members, 3 from each TIF district encouraged. However, others can be appointed if there is no interest from each respective district. It is required to establish a resolution for the creation of the TIF Advisory Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Harrington commented on any other Town resources that can be offered to the Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce to provide more support for local businesses. He mentioned the grant submission for the Small Business Loan Program for CIF funding and included a potential partnership with the Chamber.

There was also some previous discussions at Town Council and Finance Subcommittee meetings about the Chamber assisting youth sport organizations to solicit financial sponsorship or support from local businesses. Mrs. Vera Smith-Winfree, Executive Director of the Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce mentioned conflicts of interest relative to current local business support for their Annual Scholarship program. She also noted that not all local businesses are Chamber members.

Councilor Kirton noted that the Town should not mesh this initiative together with the Chamber, as local businesses are struggling from the recovery of COVID. However, he did note the importance of engaging the community to assist.

STAFF REPORTS

Development Inquiries and Project Updates

Mr. LaFountain provided a detailed report of the current town initiatives in Building and Land Use.

- Town Plan and Zoning Commission Hearings held on: 40 Tunxis Avenue (Popeye's), Large Warehouse on West Dudley Town Road, Used Car dealer license (15 Southwood Road), Barber Shop (Wintonbury Mall)
- Reviewing regulations geared towards business owners, special hearing permit/public categories
- Meeting with the Atrium – Opt-out clause for Windsor based company to move requiring a 50,000 square feet location (Concerns with potential tax abatement, gas line support services to accommodate

the move to Bloomfield). It was noted that the DECD is working with this entity and stated the potential of a \$25,000 study for installation of a high powered gas line.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Harrington inquired about any available vacant land in Bloomfield. Mr. LaFountain provided a spreadsheet of all available commercial and industrial land in Town.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Councilor Merritt, seconded by Councilor McClary and voted unanimously to approve the minutes of January 17, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Councilor Merritt, seconded by Councilor McClary and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m.