9/5/2017 Economic Development Commission Meeting

Attendance - Erin Wilson, Bill Battle, JoAnn Ryan, Lance Boynton, Jonathan Ryan

Absent - John Giansanti, Nancy Sieller

Vote to open meeting at 5:10pm - Lance Boynton - Second Jonathan Ryan

Working Cities Challenge Update:

A design session will be held on 9/11/2017. A video has been produced which will be used for focus group discussions. Look forward to next meeting for deeper discussion on Working Cities Challenge.

Moving on to branding and imaging. After reviewing budgeting from pole top branding and imaging, Lance Boynton created an excel sheet from the votes tallied from the members of EDC. The Warner Theater, 5 Points Gallery, Nutmeg Conservatory, Coe Park, and Kids Play were the most chosen top 5 candidates for the banners.

Erin Wilson explained that a new sign is to be installed on the bridge in downtown. EDC should get together and start a way finding program, in order to pre-plan the future signs throughout downtown. EDC discussed how to explain to the public how the signage will be allocated. There are about 10 possible gateways in Torrington. Any final decision on signage will come from Mayor's office, with input from the EDC. Ed Fabri will assist in finding proper placement for signs. Some locations include the exit ramp from Route 8, Near Toci’s on E. Main, the intersection of Volkman Lane, and the E. Main/Pearl St. intersection. The way finders, kiosks, and street poles will all have signage.

EDC discussed what needs to be on each of the signs, as well as the different kinds of way finders that are available. Erin suggests we phase in the recommendation to the City.

Erin Wilson discussed the completion of downtown bridge renovations - should be finished before the snow falls.

EDC discussed what to put on the 3ft high, double sided sign, at the downtown 5-way intersection. This issue was previously discussed by the Torrington Development Group. The CT DOT is having an issue trying to compromise between the interests of pedestrians and motorists. Closing off Franklin St would help. Possible ideas to be included on the sign at the 5-way intersection include: Historic Downtown, Arts and Entertainment District, Courthouse, Fussenich Park, Christmas Village. Lance Boynton suggests EDC come back in October after reviewing locations, with the goal of coming to a consensus after the meeting, taking it one step at a time.

Motion to add agenda item - JoAnn Ryan - second Bill Battle – Jonathan Ryan, Lance Boynton, Erin Wilson all in favor.

Erin Wilson explained the two public hearings following the EDC meeting this evening. Main topic: Expansion of sewer facility. Public meeting for $20m bond for necessary required mandated system improvements, which weren’t originally budgeted. The $20m will be used to expand capacity/technology, which is among the top 3 infrastructure upgrades important for future growth from an economic development standpoint, the others being fiber optic and water. The mandated upgrades do not have any relation to the issues concerning the Woodridge Lake sewer connection debate.

Lance Boynton explained that the current methods of treating the waste, such as bleaching, ozone, and electrolysis, are not able to take future pollutants out of the water stream. This differs from the need for more mandated capacity. More information will be given at the public meeting.

Bill Battle discussed how much we are charging other municipalities for use of our sewer facilities, and if are they currently paying enough, taking into consideration the large upgrades needed that the City will be paying for.

The other topic being discussed at the public meeting – blight. Erin Wilson explained that Ben Thompson has been researching the topic, along with herself, Mayor Carbone, the City Attorney, as well as the Chiefs of Fire and Police. The current edition of the blight ordinance was unenforceable, so there was no sense in using it. Together, they developed an ordinance in compliance with state statute. Erin Wilson explained that blight deteriorates property values and hinders growth, both important issues for economic development. The goal of the new blight ordinance is to keep the community responsible for their property. High grass, broken down vehicles, and broken windows are a top priority. The proposed ordinance has been reviewed by the State’s Attorney office and is all set to go. Tim Waldron will be the Blight Enforcement Officer, responsible for investigations, notices, and follow ups. A weekly Blight Task Force meeting will be held to discuss properties, building code and health code issues. The Task Force will determine whether to pursue the property owner through civil or criminal avenues, such as fines or housing court.

Looking forward – at the next EDC meeting, all materials related to the signage will be re sent for review and discussion. The goal is to have recommendations to send to the Mayor regarding signage locations at the next meeting.

Recap – Erin Wilson will send out materials with the potential signage intersections identified. Committee members need to do homework reviewing and finalizing what needs to be included on the way finding signs. At the next meeting, the outcome of the two public hearings will be discussed.

Vote to close meeting 6:11p.m. - Jonathan Ryan - second Bill Battle

Minutes submitted by Jonathan Ryan.