

ENFIELD REVITALIZATION STRATEGY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2016- REGULAR MEETING
ENFIELD TOWN HALL – ENFIELD ROOM
820 ENFIELD STREET, ENFIELD, CT 06082

A Regular Meeting of the Enfield Revitalization Strategy Committee was held on Thursday, April 28, 2016, at the Enfield Town Hall, Enfield Room, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut

CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by Chair, Earl Stallings.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Earl Stallings, Bill Lee, Town Council, Jerry Fitzsimons, Connie Provencher, Colleen Reidy, and Brittany Heisler. Members arriving at 7:28 PM: Jennifer Bruyette, Vice-Chair Ken Edgar, William "Red" Edgar, Town Council, Mary Scutt, Planning & Zoning.

ALSO PRESENT

Peter Bryanton, Assistant Town Manager Development Services, Dawn Hunt, Community Development Secretary, Roger O'Brien, Director of Planning

ABSENT

Michael Scalzo, Linda DeGray, Teri Anderson, Brent Cizek, John Foxx, and Michelle Lewandowski.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A motion was made by Jerry Fitzsimons seconded by Bill Lee to approve the minutes of February 25, 2016. All in favor, one abstention. **Motion carries 5-0-1.**

NEW BUSINESS

- **Marty Levitz, North River Street Development Proposal (Informal)**
Peter Bryanton introduced Marty and Ilona Levitz and prefaced that this is an informal presentation of Mr. Levitz's development proposal for his property along North River Street, and that the formal process would be for Mr. Levitz to submit an application with Planning & Zoning (P&Z), from which time the Enfield Revitalization Strategy committee would have 35 days to review and provide a recommendation back to P&Z. A map of the Riverfront Redevelopment District was provided to members as a reference.

Mr. Levitz discussed the incoming state rail station and the Thompsonville Village Center Zone, and how he wants to develop his land, 3 ¼ Acres West of the tracks along N River Street, and is planning to request that the Thompsonville Village Center Zoning be extended over the tracks to include his property, along with property currently owned by Eversource (CL&P / Yankee Gas), and would likely not seek any zoning variances. He provided a sample development plan to the members from Waltham, MA reflecting what has been done with a similar sized waterfront property, with upper floors containing housing and lower floors containing stores and restaurants. Mr. Levitz referenced previous zoning studies on Transit Oriented Development that look to intensify development near the rail station. In addition to brownfield or townhouse style buildings, he'd like to include a riverfront walking path and open up the riverfront as a vista and for activities. He's seeking environmental studies on his land and anticipates obtaining

Department of Interior, Parks Department permission for developing since the CT River is classified as a wild river.

Members discussed the access/secondary access – in particular for emergency vehicles - to the area as an issue. Mr. Levitz says the State is aware of the tunnel issues and the state DOT would need to make upgrades.

Chairman Earl Stallings allowed the audience to ask questions/comment. Audience members expressed concern over the change in density if the zoning is changed, as well as the possibility of actual uses differing from the proposed use, even within what the new zone would allow. There is concern about parking and congestion, as well as emergency service access. Audience members would prefer to see development of the Casket building, already in the Thompsonville Village Center zone, before the zoning is expanded to allow for additional developments. Questions arose over documents available in the Planning & Zoning office from Mr. Levitz. Roger O'Brien explained that Mr. Levitz came in to the P&Z office to file an application but was instructed that he could not file the application without consent from all of the property owners referenced, and no application fee was paid. Mr. O'Brien reiterated the documentation submitted by Mr. Levitz was preliminary information and that there is no application on file.

Peter Bryanton explained that when the consultants did a rezoning plan/study in 2013, they carved out a waterfront district, but they left it open as to what would actually be allowed and appropriate to be put on the waterfront. The vision has always been that the area around the rail station would be transit oriented development with walkable access, with most activities dependent on the rail transit. Members discussed previous development ideas for the area, making comparisons of Mr. Levitz's proposed development with the Bigelow Commons development.

Jerry Fitzsimmons stated that Mr. Levitz has the right to develop his property, and there needs to be some consensus within the community to allow development to move forward. Members agree the property is currently of no benefit to the community. Mr. Levitz mentioned that the state still has a parking issue with the rail station, and that they may opt to utilize some of his property for parking. Mr. Levitz's property being proposed for development is in the 1000 year flood zone and is redevelopment land under the CT River Conservation zone, so the regulations are different than for virgin land. Mr. O'Brien stated that Mr. Levitz would need to submit a design proposal with his zone change application indicating what type(s) of developments he intends for the property.

Peter Bryanton reiterated that the Town and the State are in a tax bind. Revitalization is not only improving and maintaining what is already there, but also infilling development, as outlined in previous studies. Urban renewal removed a lot of commercial buildings leaving vacant lots that aren't doing the town any good. New developments are needed, taxable assets are needed to keep resident taxes from rising. Earl Stallings stated that ultimately we need to create a thriving community for current residents. We have to move forward and bring in businesses that will pay taxes and bring jobs. Residents moving into a development such as Mr. Levitz is proposing would likely work in town or use the train.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Updated Action Plan**
Peter stated he is working to update the Action Plan and will have it for the next meeting.
- **Mixed-Use Development / Revitalize Village**
Peter asked that members review these documents to discuss at the next meeting.

REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES

- Earl Stallings asked members to think about ideas for the next meeting. Past subcommittee projects included creating Logo designs for each of the villages and the Lego sculpture project, which didn't gain traction. Bill Lee stated that Lego has a new VP for community interactions and he will provide that information to the committee. It was recommended that the new VP be invited to a future meeting.

REPORT OF TOWN STAFF, Peter Bryanton

- Met with CT DOT on Rail Station designs in January / Council consensus on design
- Meeting with Eversouce to discuss terms of Access Agreement for ESA
- Discussion with DECD / OBRD to obtain Brownfield funds to perform ESA on Levitz site
- Preparing RFP for 33 North River Street to bring in developers
- Finalizing conceptual plans to obligate federal funds for bike path project
- Negotiating potential improvement at boat launch area / Park and fishing pier
- Coordination with South River Street Bridge replacement / \$850,000 DOT grant
- Awarded \$700,000 LOTCIP grant to connect 190 Bridge path to Freshwater pond
- Former petroleum tank and equipment repair business abandon since 1999 at 98 Prospect Street, ESA work completed and RAP being prepared, Submitted \$550,000 grant to acquire site, remediate and sell for industrial use
- Updated Solar regulations adopted by PZC – no longer needs to be perfect rectangle/square
- Rezoning of all Village Centers / Discussion with PZC
- TOD Master Plan for Thompsonville / work underway
- 10 new Recycling/Trash Bins completed, built by ACC Machine Tech program
- Community Gardens kick-off / May 11th at 6:00 / Village Center
- Community & Farmers Market starts July 13 thru October 26
- Housing Rehab 2012 Grant closed out March 30th
- \$500,000 Small Cities application submitted for Enfield Housing Authority to renovate Green Valley and Laurel Park public housing complexes
- Effective May 2nd, Peter will be moving back to Director of Community Development full time.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Steve Cogtella stated his concern that once the zone change is approved, Mr. Levitz could sell his property and the new developers wouldn't be bound by Mr. Levitz's proposals and could do something completely different as allowed under the Thompsonville Center Village zoning which could significantly increase the density. He reiterates his concern over the access issues.

There was discussion over the 1992/2009 Thompsonville profile, which has evolved and been changed over the years.

Questions arose as to who would pay for environmental testing/remediation on the Levitz property. Peter Bryanton stated Mr. Levitz could apply for a Brownfield grant. He stated the town has no intentions of acquiring the Levitz property.

Connie Provencher asked the residents in attendance what they want to see happen in Thompsonville. Residents prefer to see open space or conservation area rather than accommodate a private developer. They expressed their frustration with current property owners in Thompsonville and the lack of development on currently vacant or blighted properties. Members feel the residents are presenting a list of issues rather than solutions. Bill Lee stated that the rail is coming and the Town's goal is that it stop in Enfield, which could be the catalyst to capitalize on and move retail and economic growth forward. He feels that the Planning & Zoning commission should come up with a Waterfront Zone that makes sense.

Earl Stallings stated that one of the issues in Thompsonville is that you can't build anything there without going before P&Z. When the rail comes to Enfield, who is going to want to get off the train with things the way they are now. We need new developments and business that people will want to get off the train for. We need to have an idea of what we WANT to see. We can't keep shooting down ideas without alternatives. We need to provide an advantage for businesses to want to come, and the rail station is that catalyst.

Audience members asked if the residents at Bigelow were polled as to whether they'd use the train. Members stated they had, and the majority said they'd use the train. Members and Audience discussed the potential cost and usage of the train. Audience members then asked why we need more housing and why we aren't conserving the riverfront land as a park rather than accommodating a private development. Peter Bryanton stated that when previous discussions of a waterfront park happened, there were questions as to who would maintain it and what type of people would it attract. He stated that a successful waterfront has multiple uses – park, housing, businesses – with lots of eyes so you don't attract the wrong element.

COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS

- Members requested a copy of the Town Council's Goals for 2015-2017. Peter will email.
- Ken Edgar stated that Planning & Zoning does zone changes and feels it's premature to recommend the proposed zoning change until we see the impact the transit center will have.

ADJOURNMENT

- A motion was made by Jerry Fitzsimons seconded by Ken Edgar to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Submitted by:

Dawn Hunt, Community Development Secretary

Approved by:

Earl Stallings, Chairman

Signature _____ **Date** _____