

ENFIELD REVITALIZATION STRATEGY COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 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, June 23, 2016, at the Enfield Town Hall, Enfield Room, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut

**CALLED TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair, Earl Stallings.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Chair Earl Stallings, Jerry Fitzsimons, Connie Provencher, Brittany Heisler, Vice-Chair Ken Edgar, William "Red" Edgar, Town Council.

**ALSO PRESENT**

Peter Bryanton, Director of Community Development, Dawn Hunt, Community Development Secretary, Roger O'Brien, Director of Planning, Bryan Chodkowski, Town Manager.

**ABSENT**

Michael Scalzo, Linda DeGray, Teri Anderson, Bill Lee, Town Council, Colleen Reidy, Jennifer Bruyette, Brent Cizek, Mary Scutt, Planning & Zoning, John Foxx, and Michelle Lewandowski.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A motion was made by Jerry Fitzsimons seconded by Ken Edgar to approve the minutes of April 28, 2016. All in favor, no abstentions. **Motion carries 7-0-0.**

**NEW BUSINESS**

- **Bryan Chodkowski, Town Manager, Riverfront Recapture Initiative presentation**  
Chairman Earl Stallings introduced new Town Manager Bryan Chodkowski. Bryan stated this presentation was prepared as part of his interview process for the position of Town Manager, showing his 10 year plan of Economic Development for Enfield. Bryan outlined the factors that drive economic development citing data from Urban Land Institute (ULI) that showcases trends and statistics in the marketplace. The data showed the top 10 things businesses look at when deciding where to locate, only some of which local government has control over. Number one in 2015 was Transportation/Infrastructure. The amount of taxes a business paid was not listed as a factor in the past 10 years. Bryan's plan applies to all business but specifically focuses on small businesses as they are an integral part of the economy. The five factors over which the Town does have the authority to influence are the workforce and adequate housing, Infrastructure, Permits and land/building availability, and Incentives.

The Town needs to improve its understanding of the environment in which it is working. Updated studies and plans need to be done that take into account current data and trends, including size and needs of today's families. The Town needs to encourage the right mix in the workforce with all the sets of skills employers are looking for, which means the Town needs the right ratio of owner occupied to non-owner occupied housing, and the right mixture of housing (i.e. senior housing, existing stock). Need to plan and correctly phase Infrastructure improvements that accommodate future growth and demand to accommodate all lifestyles. In

permitting and land/building availability, the Town needs to account for future market/business trends (such as online vs. brick-and-mortar). We need to be able to issue permits that enable businesses to build what accommodates their needs, but that is within the rules and appearance and uses the community wants. We need to be problem solvers not yes-or-no business. There are a lot of incentives at the federal and state level to encourage business location. At the local level, the Town can help fund programs to help draw small businesses into our older rehabilitation areas. These include: New Resident Community Contracts, Façade and Site Improvements, Business rent/lease guarantees, Non-Conformity buy down, and utility rate incentives (such as wastewater). The implementation phase of the plan involves the Council and setting goals and then prioritizing the steps to make it happen.

Bryan's flagship project entitled "The River's Edge" incorporates the area surrounding the state rail station, where the Town is proposing their Transit Center (33 N. River St), to encourage Enfield as a destination. Bryan stated that "cute sells" and he wants to create an experience for people using the train, where they can stroll through an architecturally themed plaza and boulevard, eat with a view of the river, and shop in boutiques. The project needs to be utilitarian, to draw people here for a unique experience, geared toward single ownership businesses, and be accessible in multi-modal ways including train, car, walk, bike, boat, etc.

Phase 1 of making the project happen involves acquiring property, controlling the property's use. Evaluate zoning regulations, create general design guidelines, update transit feasibility studies, create coalitions with legislators regarding funding. Assessments need to be done, conceptual discussions must begin with local organizations and businesses and whoever might see the project as a threat or challenge, as well as those who would benefit. Mass restaurant groupings tend to be beneficial. 2018/2019 – formal development feasibility studies need to be done, expand partnerships, formalize concepts, create limited site access plans, plan utility and infrastructure updates, update cost estimates. Next is marketing: soliciting developers and investors, amending zoning and land use for mixed use and to force "pretty" and new buildings. Then go to legislators to leverage state and local funds. Continue limited site and access improvements. Start negotiating private/public partnership agreements to keep project moving forward. By 2020, construction begins, developers and town begin marketing, utilizing appropriate incentives to solicit businesses. Maintain the coalition between federal/state/local legislators and leaders regarding funding and incentives.

Bryan summed up by saying "This kind of project in that area would be gangbusters." More people want to own their home and live in a walkable community.

Earl opened the floor to questions from the committee. Earl asked about getting the Town Council and the land boards to buy in to the project. Bryan said that his presentation has been seen by the Council and would soon be presented to the Economic Development Commission and the Planning & Zoning Commission. A new director of economic development will be brought in to help plan and coordinate efforts to move zoning changes forward. Other steps will be handled internally, such as developing policies and procedures, over the next few months.

Jerry inquired about the new zoning overlay area. Bryan stated the new zoning district would likely be from the river on the West side, south a couple of blocks past Main Street, East to Route 5, and North to the cemetery area. He'd propose a couple of incentive overlays to capture new business development, but work needs to be done at the Commission and Council level.

Statistics show that property values within a quarter mile of the transit center will increase 50%, and properties within ¼ and ½ mile of the transit center will have value increase of 25% just because the center opens. We want to capture the tax growth in that area to reinvest in the expanded area where values did not increase. Bryan stated that the taxable value and the property value don't grow proportionally, so while the property value goes up, taxes won't go up proportionally, and the value increase will be beneficial to owners in the long run.

Earl asked about the tax incentives. Bryan explained they would ask the Council to adopt legislation to create a TIF – Tax Increment Financing. This sets a base tax line of where the tax value is today. So money within that base comes in and goes directly back to the town. New development tax money would go into the TIF fund, which would then be used to reinvest in the development. Basically, money earned by the new district is put back into the new district and does not affect the town's base tax line. Peter Bryanton added that the state just passed new TIF legislation.

- **Public Comment Policy**

Peter presented the two sample public comment policies. Earl stated the committee has determined that based on increased public attendance and interaction, a public comment policy is necessary to keep the meetings in order and moving forward, and to ensure that everyone who wishes to speak gets a chance to do so. Committee members prefer the simplicity of sample policy 1 – it can always be adapted by the committee as needed. Discussion: Jerry said he'd like the public comments section earlier on the agenda so that the public may speak to things the committee may take action on during the meeting. Earl stated the committee can be flexible on when they allow additional public comment sessions, such as after presentations, etc. Red spoke to the Town Council's public comment policy and stressed that we shouldn't be limiting the public's ability to speak. Earl stated the policy is designed to let the committee manage the meeting and prevent a back-and-forth between the public and the committee and/or presenters. **A motion was made by Jerry to table this item until the next meeting to allow the public to comment on the policy. There was no second, motion dies. A Motion was made by Brittany, seconded by Ken to adopt sample policy 1 as the public comment policy for committee meetings. Motion passes 6-0-0.**

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- **Section 3: Recommendations / Thompsonville Zoning Study**

Peter Bryanton asked members to review the study as they look to change zoning in Thompsonville. Two public hearings were held during the process of putting the study together. There are not many visuals which may make it tough for a lay person to understand. Peter and Roger O'Brien are working on putting together visuals through the Transit Oriented Development Master Plan, which they anticipate rolling out in the fall.

## **REPORT OF TOWN STAFF, Peter Bryanton**

- A draft Access Agreement has been received by the Town from Eversource which allows the town to do environmental testing on their property near the proposed Transit Center.
- The rail line work is moving forward, with expanded service expected to start in the first quarter of 2018. Enfield is pushing to get their station built by then.
- Peter is in discussions with DECD to obtain funding to do environmental assessment for contamination on the Levitz property.
- Remediation for 33 N River Street is getting underway.

- Put in a cleanup grant request to DECD for \$500,000 for cleanup of 98 Prospect St, and have been short listed.
- The Hallmark property has been sold to a company named Winstanley and they are working on prospective tenants.
- The Town is working with mall on some outdoor special events – they are starting a cruise night on Tuesday nights.
- The Town is working with the Economic Development Commission on Tax Increment Finance districts in Enfield: village centers, industrial parks, anywhere else that makes sense.
- Mobil Food Ordinance has been tabled by the council pending more information.
- TOD Masterplan underway.

## **PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Lori Longhi stated she believes the public participation should not be limited. She felt the Town Manger's presentation was more idealistic than realistic and she disagrees that taxes do not matter to business coming to town. She believes ULI tends to be cities, but we are a town. She believes the Thompsonville Zoning Study was in draft form and that there were too many unanswered questions to be reliable. She thinks things should happen in baby steps and that the Town needs to get the public to buy into it, yet there is public resistance.

Steve Cogtella agreed with Ms. Longhi and believes the public is being restricted and that the public needs to be heard. He didn't think the policy was necessary. He asked if the Town Manger intended homeowners to sell or vacate their properties so the Town can create its vision.

The Town Manager responded that he doesn't foresee the process as being adversarial. His intent with the presentation is to show that the water is a resource and a draw and it's not being utilized. What economic development is today is not what it was ten years ago. It's designed to highlight the value of being in proximity to mass transit. It's conceptual and will morph over time. Its designed to demonstrate that traditional zoning doesn't work with today's market. If you want to keep this town healthy, you are going to have to as a community, look at what the market drives it to be, not what you want it to be, and not what the market was twenty years ago. The plan will evolve but the principles will be the same.

Mr. Cogtella stated he can't buy into the plan, he thinks it's impractical and that baby steps need to be taken. He asked if there was an RFP released for 33 N River Street. Peter stated there was not. Peter stated that he is not currently working with the Enfield Community Development Corporation, and their current President is Rebecca Olesen.

Irlene Provencher agrees with Steve and Lori. She believes people should be able to come up to speak more than one time. She dislikes the part of the policy that calls for refraining from applause and vocal gestures.

Roger Alsbaugh stated he is a planner and he is appalled by a number things said tonight. He stated the Revitalization Strategy Committee is part of the zoning regulations to help implement past plans and studies. He stated the three properties on the river have been recommended for acquisition for twenty five years to be used as public open space and river access, and that they are contaminated. He stated that people on South River Street are scared the Town will try to acquire their properties. He is stunned that the Town Manager's presentation is based on the economic development issues and seemingly has no reference to the past plans/studies of

Thompsonville. He believes that the TIF will create unbearable tax burdens for people living in the zone. He feels the Town hasn't addressed the issues in Thompsonville and feels the new Town Manager needs to better understand the history and what's already happened. He cautions the committee to be careful in their recommendations to Planning & Zoning.

Chairman Earl stated a lot of good points have been raised and issued a call to action, requesting both the public and committee members bring forth actionable items that can be discussed and brought to Council and P&Z.

Gretchen Pfeifer-Hall, member of the Conservation Commission, asked that the Conservation Commission be included in these discussions. Stated the Eversource/Levitz properties have been earmarked for open space/recreation for many years. She states she is more open minded about the Town Manager's presentation and agrees that some of these studies need to be updated to help address questions and concerns. She agrees targeting small businesses storefronts for the area is a good plan. She would like to see Thompsonville as a destination on the railway and not a parking lot. She suggested visiting the Glastonbury riverfront project as an example. She is frustrated that people have the attitude that we "are just Enfield and we can't do that."

Karen LaPlante, chair of the Conservation Commission, agrees with Gretchen's comments. She believes the public comment policy needs to allow people to agree with previous speakers. She believes that in regard to the Plan of Conservation and Development, only one Conservation Commission member was allowed to participate in its development and that the recommended densities were biased and not supported by the Conservation Commission. She believes private landowners on the river need to do better at keeping the properties cleaned up. She feels for safety reasons the boat launch should be separate from the recreation area when going forward with any plans. She encourages the committee to think outside the box when making recommendations for the riverfront.

Lori Longhi – agrees with Karen regarding the development of the plan of conservation and development – that there wasn't enough participation from enough parties and that only a few people steered the results of the plan. She said the town as a whole needs to be considered when make plans and recommendations for the riverfront. She thinks the Town needs to start small and get the public to buy in and that the process would work better and evolve that way.

#### **COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS**

- Earl discussed subcommittees and feels the committee should focus on one or two special projects at a time. He and Peter will work on ideas to discuss at the next meeting.
- Next meeting is scheduled for July 28, 2016.
- Earl stated that the public comment policy was not meant to keep anyone from being able to speak. This committee consists of people who are a part of the community and who are looking to improve the community. The primary objective of the policy was to help move the meetings along and allow everyone a chance to speak while being on topic and focused. The committee is open to allowing people to speak multiple times, once everyone has had a turn, as the overall time allows. Brittany reiterated that the "no repetition" portion was not intended to limit people from agreeing with others, but rather to limit complete speech repetitions in the essence of saving time. She stated that it's within the policy to say that you agree with a previous

speaker. Earl added that the policy was meant to limit back-and-forth argumentative-type interactions between the public and the committee and to keep the meeting manageable and provide a safe and productive environment.

**ADJOURNMENT**

- A motion was made by Jerry Fitzsimons seconded by Ken Edgar to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.

**Submitted by:**  
**Dawn Hunt, Community Development Secretary**

**Approved by:**  
**Earl Stallings, Chairman**

Signature\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

# Public Comment Policy

Time will be allowed at each regular monthly meeting for comments from the public. The Committee, at its discretion, may limit the amount of time allotted for public comment.

While no person may be required to identify himself/herself in order to attend a committee meeting, the Open Meetings law does not grant those persons the right to participate in the meeting and address the members of the committee during the meeting. The Committee will request individuals wishing to address the committee and, or applicants during the public comment period to identify themselves and/or the organization(s) they represent for the record.

The following guidelines apply to public comments during Enfield Revitalization Strategy Committee (ERSC) meetings:

1. Comments must pertain to the items on the agenda or which are relevant to the Committee's charge.
2. The audience will refrain from applause or vocal expressions of approval or disapproval.
3. Speakers should avoid unnecessary repetition of previous speakers' comments.
4. Comments are limited to five minutes or less.
5. All comments shall be made with civility and courtesy.
6. The Chair of the meeting will rule on any procedural matter connected with any comment and the ruling will be final.

Adopted 6/23/16