

ENFIELD REVITALIZATION STRATEGY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2017 – 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, February 23, 2017, at Enfield Town Hall, Enfield Room, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut

CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 pm by Chair, Earl Stallings.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Earl Stallings, Mary Scutt, Planning & Zoning, John Foxx, Bill Lee, Town Council, Vice-Chair Ken Edgar, and William "Red" Edgar, Town Council, and new member Marie Pyznar.

ALSO PRESENT

Peter Bryanton, Director of Community Development, Michael Ciriello, Director of Development Services, and Dawn Hunt, Community Development Secretary.

ABSENT

Michael Scalzo, Jerry Fitzsimons, Brittany Heisler, Connie Provencher, Linda DeGray, Colleen Reidy, Teri Anderson, Jennifer Bruyette, and Michelle Lewandowski.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- The 8/25/16, 9/22/16, and 12/1/16 meeting minutes were tabled until next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Michael Ciriello, Director of Development Services**
Peter Bryanton introduced the new Director of Development Services, Michael Ciriello. Michael is originally from Enfield, but spent most of his career in North Carolina, bringing a different perspective. His background is in planning and community development. Michael stated that his experiences in North Carolina differ from what Enfield faces, as they were experiencing rapid growth and change. He is able to look at what worked/didn't work in NC and compare and apply to Enfield's potential and challenges. His education and background is in landscape architecture and urban design.
- **Thompsonville Revitalization Action Plan**
Michael and Peter have been discussing the charges of all committees and commissions under Michael's jurisdiction of Development Services. Peter referred to the Thompsonville Revitalization Action Plan document that this committee previously reviewed which brings together action items from a variety of other plans and studies. So that everything that has been done can be evaluated and there can be a sense of forward movement. Peter discussed the \$100,000 Transit Oriented Development Master Plan grant that the Town was recently awarded to develop a similar plan that will incorporate the incoming Transit Center. It will pull together all the previous plans, incorporate the Transit Center piece, and create a cohesive plan that can be acted on. It will include graphics that show the vision of the area, and encourages public participation and comment. And it will have action steps to implement the plan.

Members discussed the geography and what is included as Thompsonville versus the central village, and that it needs to be defined in the new plan. Mike referred to a community analyst software that analyzes walkability and travel time in an area for economic development and help determine what is a realistic boundary for walkability and what is the market for the services we have. Members discussed safety and design solutions to improve personal and physical service, as well as spots where redevelopment would be beneficial. Mike explained that there are no “third places” for people to gather that is not home and not work. There’s another project in place to inventory what we have, what the problems are, what needs protecting and preserving. The perception about Thompsonville needs to change – incremental changes are needed. Peter stated that actually a lot has been done with infrastructure, setting the foundation to be successful in the future – that is not as visible to people.

Members discussed the new casino in Springfield and how many of those employees may be looking for housing in Enfield. Peter stated the housing stock in Thompsonville is old but it’s structurally sound and could be upgraded. And there are lots where new housing could be built. Town needs to have incentives for people to buy and invest and keep their properties maintained. Enfield could be a destination town with a lot to offer with the history and the riverfront. We need to make a good impression on those coming in on the train. Our train station will be the only one on the river, which will eventually be a great selling point. Initially the train will be mostly commuters, coming and going. This new generation wants walkability, third places, easy access to recreation – all things that can be done in Thompsonville.

Members discussed the planning and zoning process, and how the commission does regulating well, but not planning. Mary stated now that town staff vacancies are being filled, it will help the commission to be able to do more planning. Peter stated our regulations have not kept pace with the world we are living in. Mike stated the approval process is not clear, it’s cumbersome, convoluted and inconsistent and is a major problem in development moving forward. We have to clarify what the rules and procedure are and be consistent in the application of them. If the rules are clear, you can require even more from applicants.

- **Tax Increment Financing Overview**

Peter explained that Tax Increment Financing, at its basic, is where you define a growth district and determine it’s “starting” tax revenue, for example \$1 million. Any additional revenue that generates over that amount goes into a special fund that is reinvested in that district for economic development purposes. That investment in turn creates more economic development activity which in turn creates more investment and activity and revenue. This helps target growth in areas that you want to grow and that already have infrastructure. You have to write the ordinance carefully and incentivize what you want to see in the district. TIF doesn’t necessarily impact the fire districts because they are independent taxing entities, unless they are willing participants in the program. Schools don’t have their own MIL rate and are funded through the budget process. Increasing growth in the TIF district ultimately creates growth and additional tax revenue throughout town – it’s a multiplier effect and takes time to ramp up. Oversight is an extremely important component of the program.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Thompsonville Action Plan: Welcome Guide Draft - updated**

An idea previously discussed is to do the welcome guide to introduce and reintroduce people to Thompsonville. Peter, Mike and Earl discussed the idea of app that could talk to you and take

you on a self-guided walking tour. ETV and Cultural Arts committee are considering that as well. One idea is to have first-hand accounts recorded from people who have real life experiences with a place in Thompsonville. The app would be updated with different seasonal/holiday accounts. The goal is to bring people and give them an interactive, fun, educational experience and to make them appreciative of the area. Earl reiterated that this type of process will help change the perception people have that Thompsonville is a bad place.

REPORT OF TOWN STAFF, Peter Bryanton

- Peter provided a “Projects and Activities” report handout for members to review.
- The Smart Growth America Rebuilding Downtown publication is a good overview of what we’re about to embark on with understanding our community and getting community involvement.
- The State has authorized another \$50 million for the rail line construction north of Hartford, which is beneficial to Enfield. We’re pushing our legislature and state DOT for a date of construction because that’s an important thing for potential developers to know.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Steve Cogtella: Public needs to be informed of both the upside and downside of the TIF program. Wants to know if, before this proposal goes to P&Z and Council, will there be more of package put together, including: how will the oversight committee work, who has discretion of how the funding is used, will there be printed proposed regulations?

Peter and Bill stated there are public hearings that will take place as the process goes along to allow public input.

COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS

- John Foxx suggested highlighting the committee and its charges on his Enfield Today TV show that is aired on public access television.
- Bill and Red are working on a policy change that would make certain types of building vacancies part of the blight ordinance.
- Earl is appreciative of the increased involvement of public comment and committee discussions in recent meetings. He feels in the past the community piece was left out and that the community needs to be involved in the process as projects and plans move forward.
- Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 23, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting adjourned at 8:37 pm.

Submitted by:

Dawn Hunt, Community Development Secretary

Approved by:

Earl Stallings, Chairman

Signature _____ **Date** _____