

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
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Elizabeth Lynch
TOWN AND CITY CLERK
ANSONIA, CONNECTICUT

Vinnie Scarlata
Chairman
Saleh "Sal" Hanaif
Vice Chairman
Keith Murray
Secretary
Gregg Seccombe
Treasurer

Peter Kelly
Executive Director

MINUTES

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, THURSDAY, February 20, 2014 ALDERMANIC CHAMBERS 7:00 PM

The Economic Development Commission held its Regular monthly meeting on Thursday, February 20, 2014. The meeting began at 7:15 P.M.

Roll call:

Vincent Scarlata	present
Greg Seccombe	present
Bart Flaherty	present
Sal Hanaif	absent
Keith Murray	present
Terri Goldson	present
Bill Luneski	present
Horace Behrle	present
Jeff Sweeney	present

98 present, 1 absent

Also present:

Peter Kelly, Economic Development Director

Mr. Scarlata opened the meeting at 7:15. The meeting began with the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Mr. Scarlata entertained motions to accept January's minutes. Mr. Flaherty made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Murray seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion.

Mr. Scarlata then asked if anyone from the public wished to speak. No one wished to speak.

Mr. Scarlata then asked if there were any bills. He was told that there were no bills that needed to be paid.

Mr. Scarlata moved on to the Director's report. Mr. Kelly stated that the members have his report in their packets. He then stated that in the past 45 days, he reviewed the projects that he has been working on. He indicated that Better Packages isn't "quite there yet". He is supposed to be having a meeting with the owners in the near future.

Mustang Sally's is in the process of doing their renovations. The doors are scheduled to be opened in May. Personal Care America Federal Credit Union has opened. They are located at 200 Main Street. Bora Bora Laundromat also opened earlier this month. There is also a day care that is in the process of opening. It will be located at 131 North Main Street. This is close to where The WorkPlace will be located. It will be in the same plaza as Domino's Pizza.

There is a potential client to occupy the remaining space at the Hershey Product building where Better Packages will be located. There is another business that is going to be opening at 326 East Main Street. Mr. Kelly stated that he is being told that it is "retail office".

There were two potential buyers that toured the ATP building. Washington Management held discussions with the City regarding energy upgrades and retrofits for Farrels. They are looking for tax abatements from the City. They are also looking for assistance from DECD. In addition they are looking to do a feasibility study for the residential phase of the project.

Ansonia Copper and Brass, the city has met with VCOG recently to look at what the City needed to do to insulate it from any possible liability in the event that it does become the property of the City via foreclosure. Mr. Kelly then stated that he spoke to the owner of 540 Main Street, (located next to Sardo's and across the street from the liquor store). He was told that he is interested in renovating the space. He believes that construction will begin sometime in March. Construction should be finished by the end of summer.

A few contractors have contacted the City regarding two different projects having to do with the Healey Ford property. They are looking at environmental cleanup for the area located at Sardo's, behind that area and specifically where the body shop was located. Mr. Kelly was then asked if anyone was interested in the property at this point. He replied that it is still owned by Ford Motor Credit Corporation. They are not speaking to anyone. Mr. Tymniak, Chief of Staff, has been trying to contact them, but to no avail. Mr. Murray stated that he heard that CarMax was interested in the property. Mr. Kelly stated that he is not aware of anything one way or the other at this point in time.

Mr. Kelly stated that the Facebook page is up and running as is the Website and Twitter pages. Mr. Kelly then stated that he is assembling a property and land inventory to assist developers when and if the time comes expressing interest. He is partnering with the grant writer to submit two different initiatives.

Mr. Murray stated that he felt that Mr. Kelly should consult with the web page designer with regard to the property and land inventory and get it in a format that they can use for the Google Map overlay in the EDC site. Mr. Kelly stated that he was going to link available properties to the CIRC website. Mr. Scarlata stated that we already have the map overlay and it is populated with the new businesses.

Mr. Kelly then stated that he is drafting an "Annual Work Program" for the EDC's review. He stated that he has 9 initiatives that he will be elaborating upon. He is working on pulling together a long term strategy for Economic Development.

Mr. Scarlata asked if he had contacted anyone from Spectrum Health at this point in time. He was told that he contacted the owners and put them in contact with a broker that was interested in this facility. Mr. Scarlata then requested that he contact the owners and see if there may be a potential for the school for autistic children to be at that location.

Mr. Flaherty made a motion to deviate from the agenda to allow the representative from The WorkPlace to speak at this time. Mr. Murray seconded the motion. All were in favor if the motion.

Mr. Nestor Leon, Assistant Vice President of Programs for The WorkPlace addressed the commission. He stated that the mission of the WorkPlace is to create a well-educated, well trained workforce. They cover twenty towns from Greenwich to Beacon Falls. They found out about the location that they will be using from a representative from TEAM. They run a variety of different programs to prepare their customers to be valued employees. They have three Veteran initiatives, a homeless re-entry program, they have a program called "Homes for the Brave" which provides education and training to veterans. They have supportive services for veterans that provide them with any supportive service need that they may have while on the job search. They coordinate for the state summer youth initiatives for the twenty towns that they service. Last year, they put 425 youths to work for a seven week program to provide one week of work readiness and then six weeks of actual job placement. Of the 425 children, 90 children were from Ansonia and Derby. This provides the youth with educational advancement services. At the same time they are getting occupational skills training and then mirror them up with an on the job training component. It would be for out of school youth from 18 to 21 years old. These are kids that have not completed high school and are looking for a career path.

They also coordinate with the Department of Social Services with the "Jobs First" employment services program, which is the welfare to work program population that comes in a receives job development and job skills training. They coordinate with Adult Ed. There is an Adult Ed facility onsite. They have staggered Adult Ed training at the Elizabeth Street site as well as the Stamford and Norwalk sites as well. "Step up" is a state wide initiative that is coordinated through the WorkPlace. It's a subsidized employment program for employers. What happens with that program is if you have a bona fide position, and either you qualify as a small manufacturer or the individual qualifies as a low income individual, The WorkPlace can pay up to 50% of that persons wages for six months in an effort for that business to onboard somebody and reduce the costs for them. That is all coordinated through the WorkPlace.

There is also a training and education program that is coordinated through the Connecticut Department of Labor. They are \$3,000 stipends, usually for a dislocated worker population. They have the opportunity to reinvent themselves with new skill sets. Those funds go directly to Community Colleges or proprietary schools. There are also four disability programs. They believe in inclusion, so there is a youth disability program for registered apprenticeship product. There is another program that the members may have heard of that was featured on 60 Minutes called "Platform to Employment". It's a Connecticut grown initiative. It is funded by Corporate and Philanthropic dollars. It is not state funded. They receive federal funding. It is the National approach to serving long-term unemployed. The governor made an announcement of 3.6 million dollars to expand this program statewide. The President at the jobs forum two weeks ago mentioned Platform to Employment as the National Program to eradicate long-term unemployment.

What they are looking to do at this time is to put you at ease. That you are going to partner with a

quality organization. Secondly start to define what types of services we can look to offer at that location. Mr. Leon then asked if anyone had any questions that he could answer for the commission. Mr. Behrle asked how many people they put to work last year out of Derby. He was told that there are 5 different vehicles and employment is not always the end outcome. One example is the GED assistance. With that program, they are training the client so that they can pass the GED.

Mr. Behrle stated that when Mr. Leon stated that they had 90 kids from Ansonia and Derby that they were able to place in jobs, how did they find these children? Mr. Leon stated that they have a partnership with the school systems. There is a web based application that they apply to. The criteria is set by the state. It's students that receive free or reduced lunch or at 200% of the poverty level. They work with the Counselors, Community Action Agencies and TEAM to try and make sure that the application process penetrates the organizations that they are working with.

Mr. Behrle then asked where the kids are being trained? He was told that they are currently using two organizations, neither are located in Ansonia. They are using the Morrison Group and Career Technology in Derby. They are training Ansonia youth, however there is a problem with transportation. Using this location would facilitate that and alleviate the problem.

Mr. Sweeney asked if they have executed a lease with the city for the location in question. He was told they have not as of this point in time. He feels that there has been a hold up due to questions that were raised at the last EDC meeting.

Mr. Flaherty asked what exactly will they be doing at the Tinney Building? He was told that they are not sure if TEAM will be using the bottom floor or not. The top floor will be used for a Youth Academy. They are looking at between 20 to 25 youth and try to get a 12 month commitment from them to improve their educational skill set, provide them and provide them with on the job experience they can get and placed. Some of the youth may state that they need further education. They would then bring in a program that will allow them to matriculate into the Community College at a level that they don't take any non-credit courses. They will also have workshops for intensive services, such as computer workshops, resume writing workshops, interviewing workshops, job search workshops and more. Mr. Leon was then asked how many employees they have. Mr. Flaherty was told that the WorkPlace has 61 employees. The staff that would be at the Tinney Building would be about 4 staff members. There would be 2 on the youth side and an instructor and a receptionist.

Mr. Scarlata stated that he received a call earlier today from Linda Gentile. Linda was asking if EDC could partner up with Step Up for the business people and allow them to take advantage of this program. Mr. Leon stated that they have done these type of staged enrollments many times in the past. What they would do is work with the EDC to create a list of appropriate employers and information about the Step Up program to include in invitations to attend this event. The difficult aspect about the Step Up program is that there must be a current job offer to an employee. They are not asking organizations to take on labor at a reduced rate and then not have a position at the end of it. It's a placement product. What they are really looking to do is share the risk. They believe that the customers are ready and capable of doing the work, therefore, we are willing to share the risk with the employer. Mr. Scarlata stated that there are a few new businesses that are moving into the City. They are Better Packaging and Mustang Sally's. They haven't completed hiring all of their employees yet. They are currently existing businesses. Would they be eligible to take advantage of this? He was told that they would have to be in business in Connecticut for at least a year to qualify for Step Up. However, they can still work with the

regional workforce board to help find good employees. The WorkPlace has about 35, 000 people in their data base that they can look through to help them find these employees. Everything that they do is free of charge. There is no charge to anyone for their services.

Mr. Goldson asked how The WorkPlace is similar and different than TEAM. He was told that TEAM is a Community Action provider. They are funded with Block Grant money from the Department of Social Services. They are under statutes to be purveyors of supportive services for customers that are in need. The WorkPlace is also under certain statutes but their main goal is to work with business in an effort to make sure that business have the workforce that they need to be able to grow and produce the products that generate the revenue. TEAM provides customers with energy assistance and those that qualify for that assistance; we provide them with financial literacy. They get the budgeting and the coaching that they need from The WorkPlace. They also want to make sure that they get access to training and education so that they are not in a position that they are behind in their bills, but actually earning a living.

Mr. Goldson stated that Mr. Leon indicated that they provide training and support for the youth of Ansonia and Derby. He asked if they provide these services beyond those areas? Mr. Goldson stated that the Commission is interested in sustainability. Mr. Leon stated that they have a 20 town footprint and they provide a presence in each of those 20 towns. They have year round commitments with youth and school systems. We work with the tenant population all the way up to former CEO's who are now looking for employment. We run a series of workshops that are all designed to help all of these people.

Mr. Murray asked what their success rate is. He was told that there are different programs with different results. The programs that are federally funded there are three main measures. They are entered employment rate, employment retention rate and an earnings change. The earnings change is calculated six months prior to being eligible for the program and then six months after completion of the program. They are currently exceeding all of their contracted performance measures. The entered employment rate for the adults is 80%, they have posted an 86.5% placement rate with their programs. There were no further questions and the Commissioners thanked Mr. Leon for attending the meeting.

Mr. Scarlata then asked Mr. Murray to introduce his guests. Mr. Murray then introduced his brother-in-law, Mr. Lance Young. He stated that he is an engineer at Sikorsky's. He's getting his MBA from RPI and this semester they are in a class that requires them to do a Community project that they can put together within the time constraints of the semester. Mr. Young stated that he felt that his being here tonight was more of an introduction. He and his friend Steve are part of a five member group for the project. Mr. Scarlata stated that maybe they could do the feasibility study for the school downtown. My. Young stated that it could be possible. At this point, he and the rest of the group are gathering project ideas and they will present them to the rest of the group.

Mr. Goldson then stated that in light of the presentation that Mr. Leon gave the Commission, he asked if there was anything that needed to be done to expedite something? Mr. Scarlata stated that he doesn't believe that they need to vote to bring them in. He then asked if the Commission wanted to take a vote to endorse them, or to help expedite, or to encourage the City to pursue them. They were good enough to come and address the Commission since some of the members had questions and concerns. Mr. Goldson made a motion to help support The WorkPlace and help them to move forward in moving here to Ansonia by endorsing them. The motion was seconded by Mr. Flaherty. All were in favor of the motion.

Mr. Scarlata then moved on to old business. He asked if the façade committee had any news to relate to the members. Mr. Seccombe stated that Ms. Meissner was going to meet with Mr. Blackwell (ZEO). The situation has not been resolved to his knowledge at this time. Mr. Scarlata asked if he had gotten the signature from the owner of the Opera House. He was told that he passed it on, but hadn't gotten it back as of yet. Mr. Murray stated that he has not gotten the signature from the landlord of Antonio's yet as well. Mr. Scarlata stated that Dennis from Mustang Sally's requested information regarding the program. He was told that it will be hand delivered by Mr. Seccombe and/or Mr. Murray.

Mr. Scarlata then addressed the West Main Street project (parking lot). Ms. O'Malley stated that they are still reviewing the bids to make sure that they all have the correct documentation. Mr. Seccombe asked when is ground breaking? He was told that they will award the bid and have a construction meeting within the month. They will be beginning the construction in the springtime. Mr. Scarlata asked how many bids they actually received. He was told that they received 15 bids. She added that they were all good credible contractors that bid on the project. Mr. Seccombe asked how the bids were? Were they "all over the map"? He was told that they were all pretty consistent with each other and under what they budgeted for.

Mr. Scarlata then stated that the Bike Festival is on! It will be held May 4th. He then stated that Matt Feiner from Devil's Gear has announced to all of his connections the date of the Bike festival. There will be between 6 to 8 Penny Farthing (high wheeler) bikes at the festival. He wants to lead the way into Ansonia with the rest of the bikers from New Haven. David Pooler has an original bike that Pierre Lallement made. He will bring approximately a dozen bikes that represent each decade of advance design on bicycles and set them up on Main Street. He then stated that Judy Nicolari has a bike stunt person that we can hire. He will do a show for an hour or two at a cost of \$900. The cultural commission will split the cost with EDC. Mr. Behrle made a motion to split the cost of the bike stunt performer with the Cultural Commission. Mr. Flaherty seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. Mr. Scarlata stated that Mr. Luneski will be making a facebook page for the festival. Mr. Scarlata then indicated that he isn't sure how many signs he should have made up due to the fact that they keep getting stolen. He has between 30 and 50 signs. He is thinking of getting 6 of the larger signs and have them placed strategically. He is also going to put together a steering committee to handle the bike festival this year.

Mr. Scarlata then stated in regard to the College coming into town. UNH is looking for is a location to expand their graduate engineering program. They are wondering if the City would be opposed to having an international population of students living here. Their engineering program draws from overseas. This would then create a dormitory scenario if they look to go in that direction. Mr. Goldson stated that colleges have taken over buildings for housing for their students, so we may not have to be concerned about that aspect of it. Mr. Scarlata then stated that will be meeting with the President of Southern CT soon and Mr. Goldson has contacted Norwalk Community College as well.

Mr. Flaherty made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Murray seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion.

The meeting ended at 9:00.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Sardinha', written in a cursive style.

Carol Sardinha