

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
EAST GRANBY, CONNECTICUT
August 22, 2022 Meeting**

Minutes

A meeting of the East Granby Economic Development Commission was held on Monday, August 22, 2022. Members present when Chairman Paul Thulen called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM were Oliver Davis, Kerry Flaherty, Tom Lally, and Paul Oliva. Alternate member Dan Barrett arrived at 5:41 PM. Member David Iannucci arrived at 6:01 PM.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Kerry Flaherty and seconded by Paul Oliva to approve the minutes of July 25, 2022. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION WITH PUBLIC AND/OR APPLICANT

Larry Seretto, 36 Sanford Ridge, attended to ask questions about the Silverman Group's parcel and the financial benefit to the Town. Paul Thulen, Paul Oliva, and Sandra Johnson addressed his concerns regarding tax abatements/incentives and the planning and zoning application/approval process. No official site plan application for this location has been submitted at this time.

Dan Barrett arrived at 5:41 PM during the discussion with the public.

COMMUNICATIONS

- EDC Meeting Minutes for July 2022

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Sandra Johnson reviewed the recent Hartford Business Journal article regarding upcoming developments in East Granby and the trend against office space. She commented on using the Town of East Granby website as a marketing tool to support local businesses. Ms. Johnson provided information on the Silverman Group's new conceptual plan for one larger building due to potential interest they have received by a larger end user, rather than the three smaller commercial buildings that were initially included in their informal presentation. The Silverman Group is proposing a text amendment to change the maximum building size to 800,000 square feet in the Commerce Park Transitional Zone. Other towns currently have a moratorium on large buildings which makes East Granby even more attractive to larger users. Ms. Johnson also announced that the Wilson property has sold and that the new owners are planning a multi-family residential development on that property, the same use that Mr. Wilson had planned.

Paul Oliva reported that Mr. Lawrence, owner of the East Street Shops properties, has contacted him and is very interested in serving on the Village Center Plan Advisory Committee.

OTHER BUSINESS

Paul Thulen noted that the Silverman Group's request to change the building size maximum from 400,000 to 800,000 square feet is a significant change for the zone and that as an advisory

board to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Economic Development Commission should write a recommendation letter to Planning and Zoning on that specific topic.

A motion was made by Paul Oliva and seconded by Tom Lally for the Economic Development Commission to draft a recommendation letter to the Planning and Zoning Commission regarding the Commission's opinion on changing the maximum building size to 800,000 square feet in the Commerce Park Transitional Zone. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

Paul Thulen then requested that the remainder of the evening's meeting be spent on reviewing opinions to be contained in the letter to Planning and Zoning.

A motion was made by Kerry Flaherty and seconded by Oliver Davis to suspend the remainder of the agenda and enter a work session on drafting a letter to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

Paul Thulen noted that the first part of the application requests to adjust the possible size of buildings from 400,000 to 800,000 square feet and that the other change requests to limit the number of parking spaces: 0.50 spots per 1,000 square feet of total industrial square feet for trailer parking spots; 0.80 per 1,000 square feet of total industrial square feet for auto parking spots; and 0.60 docks per 1,000 square feet of total industrial square feet for dock doors.

Paul Thulen read the description of the Commerce Park Transitional Zone. Discussion followed about the pros and cons of these changes for the zone. Dan Barrett asked about the building sizes previously approved for the zone. Paul Oliva provided the history of the text amendment change to 400,000 square feet, up from 300,000 square feet, which was applied for by the Silverman Group earlier in the year and approved in April. The regulations refer to the size of the buildings, not the number of buildings that can be placed on a site, and no change was made to the allowed maximum height of buildings.

David Iannucci arrived at 6:01 PM.

Dan Barrett questioned the reason for the moratorium on large buildings in other towns in the area, and Sandra Johnson replied that these towns already have many large buildings and do not wish to construct more at this time. However, the Hartford region is an ideal location for distribution, with easy access to metropolitan areas and within an eight-hour drive to Canada. With few large tracts of land available in the northeast due to population density, East Granby is attractive for this particular site. Mr. Barrett also questioned whether the size of a larger building will limit its future uses and if a number of smaller buildings will open them up to possibilities other than distribution. He also spoke about the potential loss of trailer docks between buildings. David Iannucci pointed out that the desirability of building sizes is cyclical based on industry needs.

Oliver Davis questioned if expanding the size of the commercial building would have an affect the apartment portion of the property. Paul Thulen replied that an 800,000 square foot building would not negate the possibility of a residential component and related amenities on the site. Mr. Davis wondered if the size of the commercial buildings on site would impact the desirability of the apartments but expressed that as long as the apartments and amenities were still planned for

the site, he is less concerned with the number of commercial buildings on the property. David Iannucci commented that the desirability of the apartments will be based on the integrity of their design when it comes to noise reduction. He stated that he feels that the Silverman Group has a very good reputation with the level of investment that they put into their developments.

Tom Lally proposed that it might make sense to keep the existing 400,000 square foot limitation and require a variance for a larger size building in order to control building sizes in other Transitional Zone parcels.

Paul Oliva agreed that from what he knows of the Silverman Group, they are a quality developer. However, he pointed out that they saw value in the parcel and purchased the property when the maximum allowed square footage was 300,000. In his opinion, while their request for an increase to 800,000 square feet is probably related to a potential tenant for the site, securing a tenant is a concern for the developer, not a consideration for the Town. Mr. Oliva's other hesitation with the proposed change to the regulations involves the truck docks. He calculated that an 800,000 square foot building would allow for 480 docks, and as previously mentioned, they would all be on the perimeter of the building facing the neighboring residential communities, rather than in between smaller buildings. He also reminded the Commission that if this general change was made for the Commerce Park Transitional Zone, it would affect all properties in the zone, not simply the Silverman parcel. Lastly, Mr. Oliva commented that large buildings of this type typically attract national companies with 24-hour operations. He summarized that he is against changing the current regulation to the changes that the Silverman Group has requested.

Paul Thulen mentioned that he thought that the occupancy rate at the site might be a concern with one large building rather than three smaller buildings since a vacancy of the larger building would leave the entire site empty at once. He also thought that the impact of taxes of the one larger building should be taken into consideration since warehouses do not generate a lot of tax revenue as compared to other possible uses for the smaller buildings. Mr. Thulen stated he is also not supportive of this zoning change request.

Kerry Flaherty stated that he does support the zoning text amendment. He commented that he does not feel that it is necessary to micromanage development of this scale and that the Town should not make it difficult for larger projects like this one to be based in East Granby. Mr. Flaherty stated that the Town needs to increase revenue on industrial and commercial property to keep taxes reasonable.

Sandra Johnson commented that she sees two sides to the discussion: what might be technically achievable and what might match the vision for the Village Center Zone.

Paul Thulen stated he will compose a draft letter based on the discussion just held and circulate it to the Economic Development Commission members for comment. He requested a clear vote on accepting or rejecting the proposed zone changes.

A motion was made by Paul Oliva and seconded by David Iannucci for the Economic Development Commission to write an advisory letter to the Planning and Zoning Commission

recommending not to approve the Commerce Park Transition Zone changes. Votes in favor were five (Davis, Iannucci, Lally, Oliva, Thulen) with one opposed (Flaherty). Motion carried.

Prior to adjournment, Paul Thulen updated the Commission on the status of the Village Center Master Concept plan. Two consultant bids have been received. Bids are due by midnight this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Kerry Flaherty and seconded by Tom Lally to adjourn the meeting at 6:33 PM. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Hall
Building and Land Use Administrative Assistant