

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
EAST GRANBY, CONNECTICUT  
November 28, 2022 Meeting**

**Minutes**

A meeting of the East Granby Economic Development Commission was held on Monday, November 28, 2022. Members present when Chairman Paul Thulen called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM were Oliver Davis, Kerry Flaherty, Tom Lally, Paul Oliva, and Todd Zessin and alternate members Dan Barrett and Chick Bistany.

**MINUTES**

A motion was made by Todd Zessin and seconded by Paul Oliva to approve the minutes of October 24, 2022. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried. Oliver Davis abstained due to his absence at that meeting.

**DISCUSSION WITH PUBLIC AND/OR APPLICANT**

Attorney Bob DeCrescenzo spoke on behalf of 50-58 Rainbow Road, LLC, stating that they are seeking the Commission's feedback regarding possible options going forward, as the current size limitations of the Commerce Park Transition Zone do not meet market realities. Holden Sabato of the Silverman Group commented that tenants are not seeking 400,000 sq. ft. warehouses at this time, but rather those in the 500,000 to 1,000,000 sq. ft. range. After the Planning and Zoning Commission's recent rejection of a text amendment to allow 800,000 sq. ft. buildings in the Commerce Park Transition Zone, he discussed possible compromises in the form of two potential plans for the Rainbow Road property: splitting the parcel into roughly half Commerce Park A and half Commerce Park Transition Zone, or a zone text amendment for the Commerce Park Transition Zone to allow buildings of 600,000 sq ft.

Paul Thulen asked Mr. Sabato to address the Commission's previous concern regarding the occupancy of one large building on the site versus a number of smaller ones. Mr. Sabato replied that they are waiting on a build to suit opportunity at this time and demand calls for buildings of 500,000 to 1,000,000 sq. ft.

Sandra Johnson asked about the potential zone division of the parcel. Mr. Sabato replied that the division would be made to accommodate a 600,000 sq. ft. building in the Commerce Park A area, which would be about half of the site's current acreage.

Mr. Sabato also addressed additional questions from the Commission regarding the possibility of 24-hour operations for a large building as well as the truck docks allowed. With no tenant in place at this time, operating hours for any future development are undetermined. He noted, however, that with a limit of 600,000 sq. ft., the site would still have room between the back area and the proposed front residential area for other smaller buildings. Regarding truck docks, the proposed text amendment does not seek to change the current regulations.

Kerry Flaherty questioned the Silverman Group's repeated proposed text amendments to change the maximum building size of the Commerce Park Transition Zone and asked for clarification on

what would make the project the most marketable for everyone involved. Holden Sabato replied that the previously sought 800,000 sq. ft. would have captured a much larger part of the market. He noted that currently their brokers are bringing in potential occupants for 500,000 to 1,000,000 sq. ft. spaces, so an increase to 600,000 sq. ft. could at least address a part of that market. A structure of 400,000 sq. ft. would have to be built on a speculative basis and probably would not lease right now.

Mr. Sabato also confirmed for the Commission that the residential and recreation areas will still be incorporated into the layout of the site. He indicated that the industrial building(s) would be constructed first and that the residential development would not be contingent on occupancy of the industrial portion.

Paul Thulen commented that the Commission's Village Center Master Concept Plan project will begin this week, involving both the Village Center and the Commerce Park Transition Zone, and he welcomed the Silverman Group's participation in this effort.

Paul Oliva suggested that more definition of the actual operations of a potential tenant would help with Planning and Zoning Commission approval of a text amendment since greater information would clarify what the possible effects might be on adjacent residential zones.

Sandra Johnson raised the issue of the difference between rezoning of a portion of the parcel versus the approval of a text amendment that would apply to an entire zone.

Oliver Davis stated that he feels that a warehouse on the property does not particularly align with the Commission's mission for development that provides high paying jobs, increases Town revenue, or provides needed services to the businesses and residents of East Granby. However, with costly capital projects on the horizon, he feels this development would help to alleviate some of these future costs. Holden Sabato indicated that it is important to look at the development as a whole, including the multi-family units and recreational areas, and not only as an industrial park.

Attorney Bob DeCrescenzo summarized the concepts discussed, including the balancing of the development of the site with other development in town, the desire for greater definition of the project, and the fit of the project within the larger context of planning goals and objectives. Mr. DeCrescenzo indicated the conversations held tonight will be used to refine plans for the next application to the Planning and Zoning Commission, which could be forthcoming in January or February.

Dave Ziaks, Professional Engineer and the President of F.A. Hesketh & Associates next addressed the Commission to discuss F.A. Hesketh's current zone text amendment Application #22-10 to the Planning and Zoning Commission. F.A. Hesketh owns and currently rents 6 Creamery Brook to a design organization with 65 employees who, since the COVID pandemic, now work mostly from home. The lease of the 7,000 sq. ft. office building ends in February or March and if not renewed, Mr. Ziaks stated he feels it will be difficult to re-lease in the current market as an office building. F.A. Hesketh's application before the Planning and Zoning Commission seeks to change the setback requirements of first-floor apartments in the Village Center Zone and will provide them greater optionality should they decide to convert the building to rental apartments.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

- EDC Meeting Minutes for October 2022
- Economic Development Report November 2022
- Proposed EDC Website Description November 2022
- Proposed (Draft) EDC Activity Work Plan November 2022

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

The Economic Development Report was reviewed. The report listed the three applications before the Planning and Zoning Commission: #22-10 by F.A. Hesketh & Associates for a zone text amendment for the Village Center Zone; #22-11 by Brignole Farms for a zone change from PRD to Village Center for the property across from the Post Office; and #22-12 by Almost Famous for a zone text amendment for Craft Café Licenses for breweries.

Discussion followed as to the lack of communication or information flow about pending projects. Paul Thulen noted he has spoken to First Selectwoman Eden Wimpfheimer regarding this issue.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **A. Brokers/Realtors & Available Sites/Buildings**

Discussed with “Economic Development Report” above.

### **B. Economic Development Commission Town Website**

Paul Thulen discussed the “East Granby Town Website Listing for EDC” document he e-mailed to Commission members which outlines his recommendation for the Commission’s description on the Town of East Granby’s website.

The first paragraph provides details about meeting times, location, etc. The second paragraph directly quotes Connecticut General Statutes concerning the Commission’s activities. The third and final paragraph provides the specific goals of the EDC.

Discussion followed as to what criteria is used to determine a good paying job, as mentioned in the second goal. It was suggested that a phrase such as “equivalent to the median household income” should be incorporated to better define this goal. Paul Thulen will edit the document and send it to Commission members for their consideration prior to the next Commission meeting.

### **C. Village Center Concept Master Plan**

The kickoff meeting for the Village Center Concept Master Plan will be held this week on Wednesday. A consultant has been selected that has provided a three-month schedule of completion for the project.

### **D. East Granby EDC Activity Work Plan 2022**

Paul Thulen shared a list of EDC tasks provided by First Selectwoman Eden Wimpfheimer that he combined with a previous work plan that was in place under the Town’s previous Director of Community Development. Mr. Thulen would like the Commission to break into groups of two to three members to work on these items. He requested that Commission members identify four or five tasks from the list that they would personally like to own. The small groups will then report

monthly on the progress of their individual tasks. Mr. Thulen also asked members to prioritize the list of tasks and provide any additional input to him via e-mail within the week.

**E. Business Visitation and Retention**

No discussion.

**F. Marketing – Articles (Business Spotlight, Etc.)**

No discussion.

**G. Incentives and Regulation Changes, Façade Improvement**

Tabled pending Village Center Plan.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Oliver Davis and seconded by Todd Zessin to adjourn the meeting at 6:44 PM. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Hall  
Building and Land Use Administrative Assistant