

RECEIVED  
STAFFORD, CT

2022 JAN 13 PM 2:38

2 pages

  
TOWN CLERK

## MEETING MINUTES

Town of Stafford  
Economic Development Commission  
Warren Memorial Town Hall  
Veterans Meeting Room  
Special Meeting

**Tuesday, October 26, 2021**

**5:30pm**

**Present:** John Wittenzelner, Sal Titus, Alice Lawrence, Janene Berriault, Chris Josph, Amber Wakley

**1. Call meeting to order The October 26, 2021**

The October 26, 2021, Economic Development Commission meeting was brought to order by chair, Amber Wakley, at 5:36 p.m.

**2. Approve meeting minutes from Tuesday, November 24, 2020.**

Sal Titus made a motion to approve minutes from the November 24, 2020 meeting. Janene Berriault seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**3. Stafford Brownfield Initiative update**

Wakley provided an update of progress for the Stafford Brownfields Initiative. Several Phase I investigations have been completed with the Stafford Cleaners site moving into Phase II environmental site assessment. The Grants Office is also preparing to apply for additional funding for environmental cleanup at the Witt School through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The proposed project will be a mixed-use, that utilizes the bottom floors of the building to create a permanent farmers/cooperative market, including a farm-to-table dining experience. This vision appeals to Stafford's rich agricultural heritage and robust farming community, while generating a hub for social activity to promote economic growth. Given the Town is a USDA-designated food desert, the suggested reuse would ameliorate the desert conditions by providing access to affordable and nutritious food. The proposed mixed-use space will retain the existing gymnasium and kitchen, developing space for much-needed recreation and entertainment opportunities while providing a legal space for farmers and entrepreneurs to pursue certified food ventures. In addition, and in partnership with the Stafford Housing Authority, the upper floor would be converted into affordable senior housing with an adult day care center. Up to 25 units of affordable housing for seniors is envisioned, with shared access to the gymnasium and kitchen to augment activities for the adult day care center.

**4. Discuss, brainstorm, and begin to reprioritize EDC purpose, goals, objectives, and projects.**

Commission members shared in an open discussion about the direction and focus of the EDC. Topics and ideas varied, and included:

- Promote existing businesses; start a formal visitation/outreach program
- Stafford-wide marketing/branding/development initiatives
- Discuss ideas/campaigns/events to facilitate economic growth
- Solicit feedback on issues/opportunities and top priorities; employer/business survey
- Develop specific commission goals

- Place-making activities
- Review and discuss Plan of Conservation and Development (due October 2022)
- Increase collaboration, participation and communication with the CT Main Street Foundation, Advance CT and other economic development/commerce organizations
- New business/new resident welcome/info packets
- Create long-range economic goals
- Advocate as well as be liaisons for all challenges that face the businesses in the Town of Stafford
- Increase promotion of agriculture/natural environment, art, and historical assets.
- Working with owners of vacant buildings to prepare their buildings and sites for market needs.
- Create town map indicating businesses, points of interest, business parks, etc.
- "Buy Local" program to encourage local residents to buy from local merchants
- Launch EDC Facebook page
- Listing of commercial properties for sale or rent.
- Further partnership/communication with the Planning and Zoning Commission
- Retaining businesses while reaching out to new

John Wittenzelner suggested focusing on one or two project areas at a time, and increase frequency of meetings while having them serve as brain storming sessions. Creating a new mission statement is priority. He suggested workshop-type meetings that could also serve as the opportunity to recruit new members.

Chris Joseph discussed the importance of collaboration with the Planning and Zoning Commission, and better understanding regulations to solicit new businesses. He continued, saying consideration/focus should be given to absent business/industry in town, such as a hotel.

Alice Lawrence proposed a business outreach program, better engaging with local business, better identify needs of local employers, and resources. Sal Titus suggested creation of EDC business cards, particularly if members will be approaching/engaging businesses in the future.

Committee members agreed the next meeting will focus on reshaping the EDC's mission and objectives.

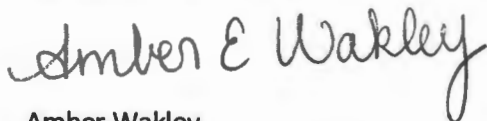
**5. New business**

No new business was discussed.

**6. Adjournment**

Alice Lawrence made a motion to adjourn, Sal Titus seconded the motion. All were in favor. The October 26, 2021, EDC meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Amber Wakley