Town of Stonington
Economic Development Commission
DRAFT Special Meeting Minutes for
September 17, 2015
Human Services Building- 5:00pm

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CYNTHIA LADWIG
TOWN CLERK

Present: Blunt White, Rich Balestracci, Ed Planeta, David Hammond, Suzanne Lane, and Danielle Chesebrough
Town Guests: Dan Barber, Virginia Abernathy, Carlene Donnarummo, Third Selectman Mike Spellman, Second Selectman Rob Simmons, two reporters from the press (Joe Wojtas and Cory Fyke) and two students from SHS civics class.
Call to order: 5:10; **Adjourn**: 7:22

Approval of July 15, 2015 Minutes

Motion: Ed Planeta Second: Blunt White All in favor

Business:

- Discussion of M1 Manufacturing Zone and a recommendation to BOS/PZC, Dan Barber presented on two Mechanic Street properties, where he is the listing real estate broker, will go on the market within the next several weeks.
  100 Mechanic Street: aka Pawcatuck Business Park (formerly Harris Graphics/Heidelberg Web Press), approximately 275,000 sf in multiple buildings, of which about 70% is occupied (30% vacant), land area 16.6 acres, currently 9 tenants; property has a history of occupancy at this level, leases are 5 years and less. Current owner purchased in 1998 for investment purposes and is in the heavy industrial rental property business with many properties throughout the US. This one is being sold to reposition. Listing price will be determined shortly, anticipated to be in excess of $3,000,000.
  82 Mechanic Street: formerly Yardney: has been 100% vacant since Yardney moved to RI about 2 years ago; approximately 225,000 sf in size, land area of 8.9 acres. Property owner is a publicly held company (Whittaker Technical Products), they became the real estate owner many years ago as the result of corporate engineering (equity/stock acquisitions). The listing price will be determined shortly, the company is seeking a quick sale.
  Both properties are subject to the CT Transfer Act (will require a State of CT approved clean-up plan to be in place at the closings), Barber indicated that for both properties the buyer would be required to be the "certifying party" (certifying that the property would be cleaned up according to the State approved plan required by the Transfer Act).
  Currently allowed uses in the M1 Zone are too narrow and date from the 1960's, uses need to redefined to reflect current business environment (for example for

a brewery and a cross fit gym to become tenants of 100 Mechanic Street required public hearings for zoning text amendments, a time consuming and expensive process). The Town needs greater flexibility and creativity to encourage new tenant uses/leases and a possible buyer or buyers. Currently M1 does not permit retail sales, boat repair, boat sales or boat storage. Previously EDC engaged Planimetrics to prepare a memo recommending updates to the M-1 zone. See Memorandum M-1 Zoning Strategies, dated October 16, 2012 on EDC's webpage on the Town website. The memo is now three years old, but very relevant and a useful resource for PZC and BOS . It was previously presented to PZC in the spring of 2013 but PZC took no action on EDC's request for PZC to be an applicant for a zoning text change to allow a Heritage Manufacturing (HM) zone. The recently approved POCD refers to the Planimetrics Memo by recommending creation of a Heritage Manufacturing (HM) zone (Initial Task 10.2.10).

- EDC will send the 2012 Planimetrics Zoning Strategies Memo to the BOS, along with a cover letter requesting BOS pass a motion encouraging PZC to act immediately on the POCD recommendation to create an HM zone for the Mechanic Street Mills.

  Motion: Blunt White Second: Danielle Chesebrough All in favor

  Selectmen Simmons and Spellmen each voiced support for this motion.
- Facebook site: Joel is working on updating. EDC needs to make decision about allowing realtors to post commercial listings on the Facebook or webpage.
- Webpage on Town website: Blunt/Joel will add a sentence in the narrative about EDC seeking new members. Blunt/Joel will also follow up with IT manager Roger Kizer about removing the links to old EDC website, need to completely take down the old EDC website so that it does not come up during a Google search. The email contact links to Blunt and Joel also need to be updated.
- Search for new Director of Planning: EDC liaison, Amy Arruda, was absent, in the absence of a status report a letter will be sent to the First Selectman asking for a report by EDC's next meeting (October 21), either in person or by letter, of progress made. EDC has previously affirmed that promptly filling the DOP position is a critical need for the Town – especially so in light of the listing of the Mechanic Street Mills and also EDC's priorities for the POCD Implementation committee approved at the July 15 EDC meeting (1) broadening M1 Zone uses, HM zone POCD Initial Task 10.20.10 and the (2) create a new zone for the Mystic Aquarium so that it becomes a permitted use on its site. EDC is willing to provide any assistance that it can.

  Motion: Ed Planeta Second: Blunt White

  All in favor

- Discussed next steps for exploring flood hazard regulations, which Rich Balestracci will continue to take the lead.
- Business outreach follow-up: Suzanne Lane is working with the Westerly Pawcatuck Chamber on a new RI initiative to train people in areas of need in the business community (i.e. bookkeeping, etc.), also hospitality, healthcare and manufacturing. This chamber initiative is related to the siting of a community college/workplace training facility in Westerly. Similarly Ed Planeta is working with a manufacturing group at Three Rivers to address job training needs. David Hammond continues to be active with SECTER and will explore opportunities for assistance by SECTER with EDC initiatives. Rich Balestracci will keep the EDC updated on Mystic Chamber activities and any possible connections for EDC.
- Guest Virginia Abernathy is interested in becoming a new EDC member and has an application pending with BOS. There are 2 permanent member and 2 alternate member openings.

Adjourn

Motion: Blunt White **Second: Richard Balestracci**
All in favor