

**October 28, 2020**

**Press Release: WinnDevelopment – Campbell Grain Redevelopment**

Revitalizing a vacant lot at the end of Cogswell Street, formerly occupied by the Campbell Grain building, has been a focus for Town officials, staff and volunteers since the building had to be demolished in 2010.

The Stonington Economic Development Commission (EDC) has been working to actively market the site, but its size and topography posed a challenge. Until recently there had been no interest from developers. Thanks to the exceptional efforts of the Chair of the EDC, the Town was able to connect with WinnDevelopment Company. Winn is an experienced developer familiar with complex sites and financing structures. Working with both the Town and State, Winn has put forward a plan for a potential public-private partnership that will play an important role in ongoing efforts for downtown revitalization.

Winn's proposal of approximately 82 units offers many benefits, including new residents in walking distance to existing local businesses and the Westerly Amtrak station, making it a much-desired transit-oriented development (TOD). The project will consist of a mix of studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom units. The building will feature a leasing and management office, a community lounge, a fitness room, and common laundry. The project will be designed to meet the Passive Housing Institute US standards, which equates to 40-60% less energy use than a typical building. The site will also offer a public-access easement along the Pawcatuck River with a walking path.

The project will create a true mixed-income and inclusive community, creating diverse housing options. The units at the Campbell Grain site will be affordable to a mix of incomes at 30%, 50%, and 80% area median income (AMI). The project will also contain 30% unrestricted market rate units.

Both the Stonington Plan of Conservation and Development and the State's Plan of Conservation and Development discuss the need for housing choice and economic diversity in housing stock. In addition to this redevelopment effort, the Town is actively working on a new Affordable

Housing Plan that will look at various ways the Town can improve access to inclusive housing through the community.

The site will need to utilize financing programs through the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) and the Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH) for the project's construction. The funding from these two agencies is highly competitive, and one critical piece is a municipal contribution to the project. In summary, the project requires a fixed assessment of taxes to be financially viable and competitive for state funding resources.

The anticipated total project cost for the development is approximately \$32,000,000. To access the CHFA funds, a 5% local contribution is anticipated. This means the Town would need to contribute approximately \$1,600,000 toward the project. To achieve this, the Town is applying for \$1,000,000 from the Small Cities Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) program through DOH, and will put a proposed fixed tax assessment worth approximately \$600,000 to Stonington voters. Based on preliminary estimates, if the site is left as it is it would generate \$30,000 in taxes over 10 years, compared to over \$670,000 in estimated new taxes with the fixed assessment in place.

During the Board of Selectman meeting two important actions were taken. First, a virtual public hearing was held to approve the Town of Stonington to send an application for funds to the CDBG program in the amount of \$1,000,000 to support the infrastructure of the Campbell Grain Redevelopment project. The Federal Government, under the auspices of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, allocates an annual amount of funding to the State of Connecticut for the purposes of distribution under the CDBG programs. Previously, the Town of Stonington has supported the regional homelessness initiative and local housing authority with funding from the CDBG competitive grant rounds.

The Board of Selectman voted to approve the application, along with a letter of support for the project.

The other critical aspect was the discussion on the proposed tax abatement. In considering how to ensure all residents have a safe option for voting on a proposed tax abatement, the First Selectman is working with Town staff on how to put together a virtual Town Meeting in accordance with the Governor's new Executive Order 9H. Once various considerations are

worked through, the Board of Selectman will hold another meeting to set a date for putting the tax abatement to a virtual Town Meeting vote.

During the meeting it was also noted, that despite challenges presented by COVID-19, Winn has made extensive efforts to collaborate with the Town, its residents, and local business owners throughout this process. The Town of Stonington is working towards meeting the State's goal of having at least 10% of housing meet the affordability threshold, as it is important for residents and the local economy to provide housing people can truly afford.