

West Haven Economic Development Commission Minutes.

Special Meeting on Wed Nov. 18, 2020

EDC Attending: Chris Gallo, Chair; Lalani Perry, Vice Chair; Elinor Slomba, Alternate

Called to order at 5:36pm. Pledge of Allegiance

1. First Presentation - Sade Colcord, AdvanceCT

Sade won the Gold Award for efforts in economic development from the State of Connecticut. She has reviewed many action plans for EDCs and is well-qualified to share thoughts on activities we can do that will be most beneficial and effective, even with Covid constraints. Sade explained that AdvanceCT is focused on recruiting new businesses to Connecticut, retaining the ones we have and helping them expand and connect to resources.

She says the #1 role for us as EDC members is to be on the ground as a support and liaison between the business community and city. To do this, we need to be tapped in to the feelings and attitudes of the business community. Supportive activities include: meeting with businesses, calling to ask how things are going, finding out if they need any help. **EDC outreach activities should touch as many businesses as we can while encouraging residents to shop local.**

We also have a branding role - creating a vision. ***What does West Haven want to be when it grows up?*** Continue to revisit three questions to get there:

- What are the industries we have already in place?
 - Small food manufacturers
 - Culturally specific import / export
 - Home based creative entrepreneurs
 - Membership of Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, etc.
- What is the mix / diversification at present vs what we want it to be?
 - Wonderful restaurants
 - Useful Services more people should know about - e.g. computer repair
 - Need more data
- What are the strengths we have to build upon?
 - Low overall vacancy rate according to Fred
 - Miles of Shore & So Much More" - Sade thinks this can work!
 - Plenty of parking, ease getting in and out
 - Spacious, attractive, central Green
 - Outdoor dining policies already in place pre-Covid - able to fast track approvals
 - Pedestrian-friendly streetscape with courtyards, e.g. Curtis Plaza (so far, underutilized)

Suggestions:

1. Many EDCs have access to a Facebook page to get out messaging
2. Point out especially attractive buildings, shopkeepers who are doing a good job
3. Some cities/towns have a revolving loan fund for improving street-level facades

Elinor Slomba
TOWN AND CITY CLERK

2021 FEB -3 PM 1:52

RECEIVED
TOWN AND CITY CLERK
OF WEST HAVEN

4. Amplify special promotions, incentives, and shop local campaigns
5. Events to drive people downtown to the business area
 - Host pop-ups
 - Farmers Markets
 - Incubators for microentrepreneurs
 - Sidewalk sales, with later hours to draw people at night
 - Virtual equivalents - FB live events, demonstrations, how-to videos
6. Work with stakeholders in the business community and reach out to them as partners (we have a list in-progress, Chris to deliver to Fred for reference)
7. CTvisit.com - get businesses and attractions to enter listings

Reality Checks:

- Covid has had an enormous economic impact.
- Businesses will close. (CT Restaurant Association has announced 600 businesses closed permanently to date.)
- Cities and towns across CT are struggling, trying to figure it out.
 - Buy local / eat local promotions do help
 - Ask ourselves: what makes the most sense here given what we already have in place?
 - Great example around the holidays - Madison put out to bid for holiday light decorations, will attract people from all over.

Enormous opportunity on the table: how to leverage the disposable income of people moving into CT from NY in droves

Brainstorming for a Blue-Sky Future

Focus on multi-generational activities that require minimal infrastructure

- Kite Festival - with kite-making workshop
- Promote birding community / birdwatching
- "A Day in West Haven" sample itineraries

2. Second Presentation: Update on Ongoing Development by Fred Messore, Commissioner, Planning & Development, City of West Haven

Overall trends for 2020-2021

Building Department reports that overall, revenue from permits has held steady compared to before Covid, even surpassing some regular years.

It is predicted that more people will be spending money on their residences, upgrading and improving them.

List of projects presented to City Council - see attachment

Rationale for investing in our community is strong. We have to get the message out loud.

- Beautiful shoreline
- Educated workforce
- Institutions (access to high quality health care, higher ed)
- Affordable housing -more than surrounding areas
- Location - close to all New Haven has to offer, between NY & Boston

Village Development District

666 Campbell Ave applying the newly consistent architectural standards

Architectural review to be sure plans comport with the character of the neighborhood /
historic relevance of buildings

Based on VDD, we can see about implementing standards in other parts of the
community.

Deep Water Boat Launch

Proposed for West River off of Elm St / Kimberly Ave - tricky location but plans in place

The Havens

Demo in-progress

Abatement required a waiver, slowed things down

New management contractor to reduce vandalism, trash

Call to Action

EDC can submit budget requests - Fred will compile his department budget in January
for submission in the City budget which gets voted on in March.

Meeting adjourned at 655pm. (Lalani motioned, Elinor seconded)

Next meeting Dec 2nd at 6pm - Banquet Hall on Marginal Dr.