



CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Minutes of December 16, 2021

Held in Conference Room A, City Hall

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Botelho at 7:05 pm. Those identified as present were Chairwoman Botelho, Mr. Leonardo, Mr. Brun, Mr. McManus, Ms. Bateman, Mr. McNelis, Ms. McNamara from the East Providence Area Chamber of Commerce and Mr. Moran (staff). Mayor DaSilva and Director of Planning and Economic Development William Fazioli were also in attendance at the meeting.

As three new members were in attendance at the meeting, the Commission members introduced themselves to each other at the meeting.

a. Approval of open session minutes of October 21, 2021

On a Motion by Mr. Leonardo and seconded by Mr. Brun, the following Commission members voted to approve the October 21, 2021 open session meeting minutes: Mr. Leonardo, Mr. Brun, Mr. Moran and Chairwoman Botelho.

II. New Business

A. Introduction of New Economic Development Commission Members

This item was covered immediately after the Call to Order.

B. Discussion on potential creation of a regional heritage district that would be associated with the Sowams tribal people.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Laura McNamara discussed the history of the concept of the heritage district that has been and continues to be developed by Dr. David Weed and his work with the Sowams people. Dr. Weed is also working with Blackstone Valley

Tourism Council Director Robert Billington on the mechanics behind the successful development of a new Sowams Heritage District. Mr. Moran indicated that the Watchemoket Square District was an important part of the City's history and this use of the land that is now Watchemoket Square has important linkages to the Sowams people going back to prehistoric times. Mr. Moran discussed the Watchemoket Square Study and encouraged the Commission to review the results of this study on the City's business webpage. Mayor DaSilva discussed several ideas that enhance Watchemoket Square including the potential for attracting tourism through the development of a multi-cultural center in the Watchemoket Square area. The Commission further discussed the heritage area idea and Mr. Moran indicated that more information would be presented to the Commission on the heritage district as the idea evolves.

There was discussion regarding how the \$28 million in ARPA funds from the federal government could be used. Director Fazioli indicated that using ARPA funds for loan applications would not be allowed because of the federal regulatory requirements but that the Commission could utilize funds to establish a façade improvements program and would meet the requirements. Using funds to establish a business incubator in the City was also touched upon by the Mayor. There was additional discussion on how the ARPA funds could be applied to attract tourism, hospitality that leads to economic investment and job growth.

IV. Staff Report

A. Discussion on active and recently approved projects in the City and other economic development relevant activities underway

Projects underway and discussed at the meeting included the current status of the Newport Center development, the Ivy Place development, the Waterman Avenue and Circle Drive multi-family development, the new Paiva Insurance office building on Warren Avenue, Quick Fitting Company and the sale of the 108,000 square 25 Fairmount Avenue industrial building. No tenant has been announced for 25 Fairmount Avenue yet, but its sale is an important milestone. Mr. Moran also noted that Igus was planning an expansion in the future that would significantly increase the size of the operation and their employment numbers.

Director Fazioli discussed the Waterfront Enterprises and the Bold Point entertainment venue and the potential development of the South Quay as a wind energy lay down area for turbines that will be constructed at sea.

Mr. Moran stated that Roger Williams University has completed its student studio for Riverside Square and presented it to City staff a few day back. The final report will be available in mid-January and can be transmitted to Commission members when it is submitted to the City.

Mr. Leonardo discussed the Incredibowl business and how they have acquired the former Gaipos market and will be looking to open in 2022.

Director Fazioli discussed the South Quay and plans to utilize the site as a laydown area for wind turbine components in preparation for wind turbine installations that will be occurring of the Rhode Island and Massachusetts coast.

The Commission discussed the Henderson Bridge project and how the land surrounding the project could potentially be used after the project is completed. Mayor DaSilva discussed the impacts that the Henderson Bridge and Washington Bridge projects will have on the City's waterfront and that the new exit ramp to the waterfront will provide much easier access to the waterfront. The redevelopment of the Valley Street area was also discussed.

The Commission received an update on the Exxon Mobil land sale from Mayor DaSilva and Director Fazioli. As a result of a tax agreement Exxon Mobil agreed to place portions of their property for sale for potential redevelopment. It is important to note that the Riverside Little League Field will not be eliminated. It may need to be moved to another location, but it will not be eliminated. Portions of the Exxon Mobil land more specifically to the east of Wampanoag Trail is undevelopable and could potentially be acquired for conservation purposes as this land is primarily wetlands.

Ms. Bateman asked about the Riverside Square project and the proposed development on the former Vamco site. City staff provided an update on the status of the project who was developing it and what the schedule was for completing the project.

The Commission discussed the subdivision of land on the former Platt Watters School complex. The development will include single family parcels and a couple of parcels that will have duplex homes on them.

V. Adjournment

On a Motion by Mr. Leonardo and Seconded by Mr. Brun, the Commission unanimously voted to enter into executive session.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm

Respectfully submitted,

James Moran

Recording Secretary