Economic Development Commission

Special Meeting

August 20, 2025 – 5 PM – Ludlow Room, Windsor Town Hall and via Zoom

PRESENT IN PERSON: *Randy Graff, Sharran Selig-Bennett, Tim Rice, Al Loomer, and Bill Davis (TIF Advisory Committee)*

PRESENT ONLINE: *Glenn Davis, Stephen Cogan*

ABSENT: *Nathan Karnes*

STAFF PRESENT: *Peter Souza, Patrick McMahon*

GUESTS: *Debbie DeLucia, FTDT*

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

   Chairman Graff called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM. For the benefit of new members introductions were made.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

   No public comment.

3. **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

   a. Day Hill Road Zoning Overview

   McMahon provided a high level overview of the Day Hill Corporate Area Planning Study, which is available to the public online, as well as zoning considerations in the Day Hill Corridor. First, staff is developing a Design Development District or "overlay zone" for two focus areas in the corridor – Waterside Crossing and Voya Village to further recommendations from the Corridor sttudy. The new overlay would open those areas to residential and mixed-use development. Second, there is a text amendment proposed by a prospective owner of 1 Waterside Crossing, a 87,593 SF vacant office building, that would allow for the adaptive reuse to residential apartments.

   Loomer asked if developers would need a variance to pursue residential or mixed-use in each case or are we amending the regulations for the whole DH3D. McMahon answered that the underlying zone remains industrial for the vast majority of the corridor. The zoning amendments being proposed would allow more flexible uses through a special use process for adaptive reuse of corporate office space or a design development process in a couple of focus areas, Waterside Crossing and Voya Village, for a property that is proposing adding new buildings in addition to existing buildings on the site. Graff asked whether the Hartford was included in the Waterside Crossing focus area and it is.

Souza said an adaptive reuse project would require a public hearing under a special use. If a project is going to add buildings beyond the existing buildings then a two-step process would occur. The developer would seek approval of a concept plan and then, if approved, submit a more detailed plan for review and possible approval.

Loomer was present for the Planning and Zoning Commission discussion and he thought they were overall favorable to the adaptive reuse idea. Consistency with the regulations for Great Pond on unit size would be important.

b. Development Incentives

McMahon discussed a regional office analysis prepared by Goman & York that highlights the challenges of office vacancy and reductions in value. In response, staff is developing potential financial tools designed to stimulate investment in new housing, adaptive reuse, and commercial office revitalization, aligned with the Plan of Conservation and Development and the Day Hill Corporate Area Planning Study. McMahon provided background into existing financial incentive tools including the Assessment Abatement Program, Rehabilitation Area Ordinance and Tax Increment Financing Policy and how they have been used in the community.

As the vast majority of Windsor's office buildings are over or nearing forty years old and currently have depressed value, the Rehabilitation Area Ordinance could be a powerful tool to promote reinvestment for office or adaptive-reuse. Graff asked what commercial properties have taken advantage of the program and Souza mention All-Crate and Service Steel Aerospace as examples.

McMahon presented potential Assessment Abatement Program amendments for discussion; including 1) Adaptive Reuse of Office Buildings Under 40 Years Old into Housing & Mixed-Use; 2) Under 40 Year Old Office Building Revitalization (Non-Housing Reuse); and 3) New Housing Development. McMahon outlined proposed eligibility criteria for each scenario, affordability criteria, the abatement schedule and optional criteria to review.

Graff asked what happens if I property was sold after the improvements were made but before the abatement term was completed. Souza stated that would be covered in the abatement agreement as to the successor receiving the benefit as long as they abided by the original terms or a claw-back.

McMahon mentioned that the state recently gave enabling legislation to go out to 30 years for tax abatements which communities like East Hartford are providing. Windsor's practice has been to provide abatements for much shorter terms.

Graff asked where assisted living facilities would fall and McMahon answered residential use. Graff asked whether recreation would be an eligible non-housing use. Graff asked about impacts of revaluation and Souza said language is incorporated into the abatement agreements regarding that adjustment. Selig-Bennett asked about daycares, schools or other uses that support residential.

Each of the scenarios speak to the possibility of Fixed Assessments Agreements during construction. The Assessment Abatement Policy does not currently enable Fixed Assessment Agreements during construction. It may be beneficial to property owners to have access to a fixed assessment agreement that locks in the pre-development tax assessment during construction and early operations. This effectively achieves a tax reduction over time as property values would otherwise likely increase. Whereas an abatement, reduces the tax amount owed post-Certificate of Occupancy.

McMahon mentioned that the abatement policy did include multifamily in Windsor Center for a period of time but that provision sunset. McMahon said we might want to consider abatements for new multifamily residential if the developer includes some portion of the units as affordable. McMahon explained that the Town does not have an affordability mandate under zoning. The Town has some provisions where a developer is provided a density bonus if they agree to incorporate affordable units. McMahon explained how 8-30g works in the state and that Windsor would always be challenged to get to the 10% threshold. Under the new housing scenario discussed there would be a greater incentive provided the more affordable units that are proposed and the deeper the affordability. McMahon explained that affordability is often described by the percent of area median income - at 40%, 60% and 80% AMI. McMahon stated that Bowfield Green and the proposals for 1 Waterside Crossing are market rate. Loomer asked whether this would only be for the Day Hill district or town-wide. Souza said we are seeking input from the EDC as to whether to focus only on Day Hill at this point or explore other distinct areas in town that would be eligible for a new housing abatement. McMahon said that any incentives should be narrow, streamlined and effective as possible. Essentially, to help fill a gap in a financial pro-forma. Selig-Bennett said we should define the geographic areas where incentives might apply rather than town-wide. Graff said the focus is on Day Hill but maybe in the future a TIF district could be created for Wilson and Poquonock. McMahon mentioned the Villages at Poquonock and that the developer had inquired about possible incentives. Loomer said it would be a tougher sell outside of the Day Hill area but for Day Hill we do need to address the reuse of office buildings. Loomer also mentioned the criteria of a development being a net positive impact on taxes. Loomer thought there could be some push-back on an affordability requirement. It is important to inform the public that affordability does not necessarily equal low-income housing. Souza suggested that we present some hypotheticals such as what a teacher could afford. McMahon mentioned that the increase in housing costs for both ownership and rental have increased substantially in the last couple of years.

Souza mentioned that the town has lost significant tax revenue with the vacant office buildings so we need to address this for the fiscal health of the community. Souza asked that if Commission members had some thoughts after the meeting then to pass the thoughts on to McMahon in preparation for the next meeting. Graff agreed and said that we need to address the vacancy issued on Day Hill.

McMahon discussed the possibility of state assistance through the Department of Economic and Community Development's recently authorized Greyfield Revitalization Program and regional assistance through the Capital Region Development Authority. In the last session of the legislature, the state authorized $20M for year one and $30M for year two of the Greyfield program which will be stood up by DECD. The Town addressed a letter to Governor Lamont and DECD expressing interest in the new program.

4. ITEMS FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

DeLucia mentioned the Concerts on the Green and added September 4th for Gene Donaldson. Farmers Market will operate until October 16h. Eco Monarch Festival will be on the town green on Saturday, September 13th. Loomer asked whether there was going to be a Windsor Center cleanup. DeLucia will look into potentially organizing one. Loomer asked about electronic recycling as part of the festival and DeLucia said she believes that is being incorporated. The upcoming concert of the green will support the Doug Flutie Foundation.

5. ITEMS FROM COMMISSION

Selig-Bennett asked about the café going into Founders Square. McMahon discussed the various uses on the first floor of Founders Square which includes First Town Realty, L'il Plant Shop, Moneta Moments, Blue Dragonfly Gift Shop, and the recently announced BOP café. Selig-Bennett asked if any of the retail businesses have been leased for Bowfield Green. McMahon stated that there are no leases in place but construction is going well. Sachdev Real Estate has hired a marketing firm to highlight its properties. Selig-Bennett mentioned the apartment upgrades in the building that her business is located. Union Street Tavern space is being renovated. Rick Shuler from Tunxis Grill will be the operator. Tulsi has its certificate of occupancy and will be opening soon. Graff asked about the Stop & Shop distribution center. McMahon mentioned that the Pea Pod service was being eliminated at the Kennedy Road location. Graff asked about the property below the Marriot and McMahon responded that the pickleball facility is being constructed there. Graff asked how they were going to access the property and McMahon responded that there is a shared driveway with the hotel. Loomer asked about the Big Lot space and McMahon said a recreational use is slated there. Loomer asked if it was going to be pickleball and Souza responded no but mentioned pickelball courts at Welch Park. The Wilson Park has been well received. McMahon mentioned a new nail salon in Poquonock and Mr. Tso restaurant opening in the Windsor Shops.

6. ITEMS FROM STAFF

Updates were provided during Items from Commission.

7. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Selig-Bennett moved approval of the minutes for November 20, 2024 as presented. Rice seconded. All in favor. Motion approved.

Loomer moved approval of the minutes for January 15, 2025 as presented. Selig-Bennett seconded. All in favor. Motion approved.

Selig-Bennett moved approval of the minutes for February 24, 2025 as presented. Loomer seconded. All in favor. Motion approved.

Selig-Bennett moved approval of the minutes for March 19, 20254 as presented. Rice seconded. All in favor. Motion approved.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Selig-Bennett motioned to adjourn. Meeting adjourned by Graff at 6:46 p.m.