

Town of Barkhamsted
Economic Development Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
Highway Garage
October 21, 2021

Meeting called to order at 7:10 PM

Attending members: Bob Pulford, Brian Johnson, Tim Deschenes-Desmond, and Mark Mahoney (by phone). Also present was Don Stein, First Selectman.

Review of minutes: On a motion by Tim Deschenes-Desmond, seconded by Brian Johnson, and passed unanimously, the minutes of the September 1, 2021, Special Meeting were approved.

Discussion:

- **Update on COVID-19** – The infection rate in Town has returned to being largely flat, although there have been two recent, Covid-related deaths among older adults. The schools have continued to function well, although there was an uptick in cases in the Barkhamsted Elementary School, which now seems to be under control.
- **Broadband Services/Task Force** – This activity has still been on hold while the town and the region attempt to figure out how to move this initiative forward. The ARPA funds and the Federal Infrastructure funds may be available to help with fiber optic installation, but that will not provide adequate funding without the Town participating in the funding. Some of the larger cable and internet providers are starting to express interest in providing fiber optics to the region, but the details and whether Barkhamsted will be part of these initiatives is still unclear.
- **NWCT Economic Development Summit** – The Northwest CT Economic Development Summit was held at the 5 Points Art Center on September 23rd. The event was a good opportunity for networking and learning about initiatives that are taking place. There were presentations about the activities being undertaken by the Northwest CT Economic Development Commission and also several workshops that got into more details on items like Discover Litchfield Hills, etc. Unfortunately, the evening was quite rainy, which kept attendance down, but those who did attend felt that the presentations were good, but the workshops not quite as useful.
- **Business Promotion** – There was no news on the interactive tourist map and the DLH website. Don Stein took the action to work with the Riverton Merchants and the Barkhamsted Historical Society to see if there could be synergy with DLH in terms of promoting those organizations and their events. The members also felt that the spring would be a good time to hold an in-person business get-together with town businesses, and that we should hold it at the Old Riverton Inn, which has done very well since the restaurant and bar re-opened. However, the public health situation still would dictate whether an in-person get-together is feasible.
- **Economic Development Initiatives** – There was some discussion about the legalization of marijuana and the possible economic benefit of a dispensary or growing facility being located in Town. The Planning & Zoning Commission will be looking at the Town's regulations to

determine what changes are appropriate and then will hold a public hearing to present those possible regulatory modifications. While it is not likely that Barkhamsted would have a dispensary or grow facility, if there were any facilities built, the town would receive a significant payment from the taxes levied on the product.

As mentioned above, the Town is looking at how to spend the ARPA funds received in the spring. The committee working on planning on how to spend these funds will be meeting on 10/26 to flesh out the expenditure strategy. There are very specific groundrules for how this money can be spent, but the rules do include water and sewer and broadband expansion. Other uses include the use of funds to replace lost revenue and to undertake projects (not previously budgeted) that are needed as a result of the pandemic impact. Grants will also be made to public agencies that lost revenue and which were then unable to perform their basic mission.

- **Trails Grant** – Don Stein mentioned to the commission that there was an announcement regarding the CT Recreational Trails Grant Program. Proposals are due by November 1, 2021. A total of \$3 million was approved by the State Bond Commission on July 23rd, and is available to municipalities and other government and nonprofit organizations for trail projects. The Town will submit a grant request for \$45,000 (20% cost share) to look at the feasibility of building a bridge across the Farmington River to connect the two State forests on the east and west banks. These are competitive grants, so there is no guarantee that the town will receive one of the awards.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Stein