

2018 MAR 21 A 8:35

BY: LK

Wilton Economic Development Commission

**MINUTES**

3/14/18 Regular Meeting

7:15 PM, Comstock Room 18

Attendees: Dan Berg, Christian Bilella, John Kelly, Tracy Serpa, Vivian Lee-Shiue, Melissa Rotini, Brad Unger, John Wilson, Jennie Wong,

Absent with Notice: Kim Purcell

Guests: Lori Bufano (BOS), Sarah Curtis, David Genovese (Baywater Properties), Debra Hanson (Chamber of Commerce), Scott Lawrence (P&Z), Vicki Mavis, Andy Pforzheimer (Barteca), Jeannette Ross (Wilton Bulletin), Lynne Vanderslice (BOS)

- 1) Opening and administrative items –
  - Call to order – meeting called to order at 7:22PM
  - Approval of minutes from 1/10 meeting – Jennie Wong motioned to approve minutes. Brad Unger seconded the motion. Motion carried 6:0 with 3 abstaining (Dan Berg, Christian Bilella, Melissa Rotini)
  - Announcement of new commissioners and brief introduction – Christian Bilella and Melissa Rotini. Kim Purcell was absent.
- 2) Guest attendees – Andy Pforzheimer (Founder, Barteca) and David Genovese (Baywater Properties) – Vivian had sent the questions ahead of time (see attached), and we started with the first question under “BOTH” (“What are the demographics...”), but chose to structure the meeting as a free, open discussion with both David and Andy. They focused on:
  - Reasons they came here (or not) initially
  - Trends seen in and across towns
  - Discussion of what other towns have done and how/why
  - Speculation on where things might go from an office, commercial, and transportation standpoint.

Some conclusions - both felt that the issues faced in town were somewhat systemic and not necessarily due to anything specifically the town was/was not doing incorrectly. Many trends discussed were consistent with what we heard when we did analytical survey. For example:

- Lack of easy access to transportation
- Current demographics within the towns
- Offices moved here because founders had a connection to town.

Some areas for improvement or consideration –

- Exploration and active discussion with P&Z (during POCD discussions) regarding housing and retail regulations –mixed use buildings (commercial, residential and retail all in one building), denser housing in very specific and strategic areas.
- More active marketing on current Wilton assets – open space, schools, etc.

- Consideration of alternative and unique office options like We Work and ILab

We did not discuss next steps and will circle back at next meeting to see what areas we can potentially focus on.

### 3) Administrative (continued)

- Review dates for meetings for calendar year 2018:  
4/18 (third week in April due to spring break prior week)  
5/9  
6/13  
7/11  
AUGUST - hiatus  
9/12  
10/10  
11/14  
12/12
- Expiration of commissioner terms – it was brought up that all commissioners' terms expire 6/30. Vivian will circle with Jackie / Lynne to find out what the process is for either resigning at end of term or requesting to be re-appointed.

NOTE: After the meeting, Vivian confirmed that either way, commissioners should contact Jackie Rochester and let her know of their intent, whether they would like to be reappointed or resign. This should be done before June if possible.

### 4) New Business

- Debra Thomson-Van – Sustainable CT – Debra came to discuss the Sustainable CT initiatives and some of the current programs underway.
  - She is speaking with multiple commissions to try to get them to adopt some of the current initiatives listed by Sustainable CT in order to be Bronze and Gold level towns. She believes Wilton could already qualify as Bronze.
  - If agreed, the proposal would be collectively taken to the BOS.
  - The EDC agreed to review the current list of initiatives and see if there are any that fall within our scope, and we will revert back to Debra,
- Discussion of Wilton Center flag – deferred until April.

### 5) Old Business – the EDC liaisons provided their updates on the below:

- EDC liaison updates
  - Schenck's Island Merwin Meadows
  - Plan of Conservation and Development / P&Z
  - Wilton Survey Working Group / BOF
- Project updates and next steps
  - Summary of special projects – Sarah was not at the meeting and hence we skipped over this.
  - Signage working group – Melissa will be helping Vivian with this initiative

- Digital and social media working group
  - Marketing and brochure
- 6) Open Discussion and/or continuation of any topics above – no additional items were discussed.
- 7) Adjourn – with no further business, Brad Unger moved to adjourn the meeting, Dan Berg seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 9:57PM.

List of Questions sent to Andy Pforzheimer and David Genovese:

**Andy:**

- A few years ago, you opened restaurants in Greenwich, Stamford, Westport and Fairfield (among others). You also have expanded outside the metro area - was Wilton ever on the short list when expanding locally and if not, why not? What made these other towns/locations more attractive?
- Would you ever consider opening a restaurant here? What open questions or concerns do you have that would need to be answered or addressed to make this a serious consideration?
- Is Wilton at its capacity for restaurants? If so what amount of growth could result in additional restaurants? Are there any potential viable sites for a restaurant?
- What made you choose Waypoint? Would a Waypoint type development in Wilton attract a restaurant?
- Are there incentives the Town can provide to attract restaurants?

**David:**

- What makes your existing tenants' businesses work here? What doesn't work? Do you see any major gaps in offerings/opportunities for new businesses here?
- Retail vacancies are increasing in Wilton and surrounding towns. Can these buildings/spaces be redeveloped or do we just have too much real estate in a world where brick and mortar is now longer needed?
- What is the potential of someone purchasing and redeveloping Kimco property? Thoughts on what that might look like? Are there incentives the Town might provide to motivate investment?
- Any ideas on how Wilton can increase connectivity between Wilton Center and RT 7?
- You have multiple properties in Darien and Westchester. Aside from your personal ties to Darien, what makes Darien more attractive than Wilton? Is it simply location or does the town of Darien offer attractive incentives; is their town approval process more efficient or easier to deal with? What types of projects are in your current pipeline? Are the opportunities for Wilton to partner with you or another developer on projects in the future?
- How was the concept to develop downtown Darien created and implemented? How was the plan developed, who were the key advisors/planners/stakeholders, and how are projects like this typically funded (public/private partnership? Private equity?)

**For Both:**

- What are the demographics for your clients/customers? Have you seen any noticeable shifts over the recent past in this profile? If so, how do you plan to change the ways in which your firm markets itself?
- What is Wilton's reputation for doing business, both in terms of establishing a new business, and maintaining operations ongoing?
- With the current economic climate in CT have you seen a change in demand for your services? Can you see this getting better in the near future?
- What are your experiences in working with other neighboring towns? What is the dynamic, how flexible are they with variances and other requirements, how easy is it to obtain information?
- How did you work with existing property owners? Were all of the target properties simply purchased from existing owners? How to integrate this audience?
- Generally speaking, how is funding / financing obtained on large projects?
- What is your interaction with State/Federal agencies in areas that required dealing with those entities? (Environmental, for example). Did the towns facilitate this process?
- Any recommendations for a blueprint/battle plan for Wilton?