

Community Cultural Center Room 111

December 19, 2023

Special Meeting Re: Mayor's Administration Priorities

PRESENT Chair Richard F. Kehoe, Vice Chair Donald Bell, Jr., Majority Leader
Sebrina Wilson, Minority Leader John Morrison, Councilors Angie
Parkinson, Awet Tsegai, Harry O. Amadasun, Jr. and Travis Simpson

ABSENT Councilor Thomas Rup

ALSO Mayor Connor S. Martin
PRESENT Eileen Buckheit, Director of Development
Melissa McCaw, Chief Administrative Officer and Finance Director
Steve Hnatuk, Assistant Director of Development

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kehoe called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

MAYOR'S ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES

Mayor Martin stated that the purpose of this meeting is to share a brief update on current Town Economic Development projects as well as additional initiatives under consideration by the Administration. The Mayor stated that as stakeholders in service of the community, he is looking for the Council's feedback to vet his vision to grow East Hartford's Grand List and improve our quality of life through successful and sustainable projects.

The Mayor provided a brief summary of the major development projects inherited from the previous administration, including:

- Silver Lane Plaza- The relocation of tenants is still in process. A bid for redevelopment has been received by the administration, and the Mayor anticipates demolition of the middle building on the property in February. The Council discussed the priority of providing more retail space in the area. After additional discussions with the developer, the mayor will have further discussions with the town council as well as the public.
- Rentschler Field is slated to for completion in March. Upon completion, National Development will seek additional tenants for the parcel next to Cabelas which is targeted for science or high tech companies.
- Concourse Park- Mayor Walsh had previously approved an extension until April for the developer to obtain funding for the project. The Mayor anticipates having the developers attend the January 16th meeting of the Town Council to provide an update on current financing for the project.
- Church Corners Inn- The bid has been awarded to Parker Benjamin with plans for conversion of the space into 24 apartments with commercial space. The Mayor anticipates a vote on the transfer of the property will be presented to the Council in January. Parking solutions are still under review.

- Veteran's Memorial Clubhouse- The Administration awarded a public/partnership for the property with Maneeley's Catering Services. The Mayor is considering changing the scope of development to incorporate recommendations of Maneeley's on how to best use the venue which may exceed the budget for the project, currently at \$6.5 million. The Council discussed providing local residents the opportunity for feedback on the best use of the facility as well as more consideration to keep the space community-focused with public accessibility.
- Town Hall Renovations- The Mayor shared that renovations are on schedule and under budget and anticipates Town departments moving back into the building in March.
- Youth Sports Facility- Administration is anticipating results of the needs assessment in the 9 to 12 weeks that will provide further guidance on next steps for the project.
- Founders Plaza - The Mayor is working with the Port Eastside partnership group to best understand the expectations and requirements of the State and Town for the project. A request has been made for a master plan of the project that highlight the benefits of the project for the Town and its residents. The Bond Commission has previously awarded the Town with funds for the demolition of the property at 99 Founders Plaza. The Capital Region Development Authority will only release funds once a more complete scope of the project has been provided. Administration has proposed isolating the redevelopment of 99 Founders Plaza as a singular phase to the larger project. The Mayor hopes to have a demolition and development agreement signed off on by all parties to bring to the Council for approval in the coming weeks.

The Mayor then discussed with the Council a list of additional projects currently in development or under consideration, including the following:

- Creation of a pollinator garden at DePietro Park as part of a larger pollinator pathway in partnership with the Rotary Club, the Beautification Commission and the East Hartford Garden Club.
- Partnership with Handel Farm to plant a sunflower garden path at DePietro Park.
- Reassessing the components of previously proposed DPW facility improvements to save cost.
- Creation of a formal ceremonial burning ground for the purpose of retiring American flags.
- Reimagining Bicentennial Square by relocating historical veterans monuments throughout Town for the purpose of creating a centralized historical experience for residents.
- Placement of sidewalks along Naubuc Avenue towards Glastonbury.

The Mayor discussed with the Council prioritizing the revitalization of Main Street, with a goal of developing an enhanced community experience that promotes safety, entertainment and supports small businesses. A catalyst of his vision is the closure of Bissell Street (across from the Town Green) to provide for a retail area similar to Hartford's Pratt Street and Purnell Place in Manchester. An RFP has been put to bid for the purpose of studying the impact on traffic flow if the road were to be closed off.

Administration plans to pursue a deeper transportation study with CRCOG for the entirety of Main Street for the purpose of creating a larger downtown revitalization plan

The Mayor expressed his appreciation to the Council for their feedback on the various projects. A more complete presentation that incorporates comments provided by the Council will be made to the community by way of a special meeting planned for late January/February.

MOTION By John Morrison
seconded by Don Bell

to **adjourn** at 8:04 pm

Motion carried 8/0

Attest _____
Jason Marshall
Town Council Clerk