

**Torrington Development Corporation**

**Board of Directors**

Tuesday, December 7, 2010, 8:00 a.m.

TDC Office

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**Board of Directors Members Present:** J. Baer, R. Bingham, T. Chamberlain, C. Donaldson, P. Herbst, J. Lalonde, G. Libby, M. Menard, V. Muschell, G. Perosino, J. Ryan.

**Others in attendance:** B. Baxter, M. Cook, V. McDermott (Milone & MacBroom), S. Nocera, E. Fabbri, B. Battle, S. Temkin, D. Bender, S. Roth, S. Wagner, J. Simone, K. Whitaker-Parsons, J. Scharnberg, M. Agogliati (Register Citizen), K. Litton (Republican American).

Quorum present.

8:02 a.m. Meeting called to order by President Baer.

**Prior Minutes**

Motion by J. Lalonde to approve the Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting 10/5/2010.

2<sup>nd</sup> by V. Muschell.

Approved.

**Project Summary:** P. Herbst reported. The \$750,000 grant for the west side of Main Street improvements is now in the hands of DOT so the project can now begin to move along. B. Baxter is to attend a Conn DOT workshop this week along with Milone & MacBroom (M&M) regarding additional grant possibilities such as the gateway grants to continue to source funding for the project. Regarding the status of East Main streetscape improvements in front of "restaurant row," per DECD, the original request for \$250,000 that had been deactivated can now be reactivated. According to Baxter, the Bond Commission status, however, is still uncertain. CLP and ATT will need to look at any required utility work. ATT can conduct a preliminary review/needs assessment for a cost of \$189 at that location.

Motion by J. Lalonde to approve \$189 to ATT for preliminary review/needs assessment.

2<sup>nd</sup> by G. Libby.

Approved.

**Torrington Downtown Partners Project Status:** TDC has entered into a contract with M&M for a concept plan regarding the parking for the areas behind the buildings facing Water Street between South Main and Prospect Streets. The letter agreement dated November 12, 2010 quoted a lump sum fee of \$5,000. Verbal clearance was received from Ned Moore at DECD to shift grant monies over to

that line item since M&M came in about \$40,000 under budget for the original MDP work. The City has signed off on a letter of modification and sent that over to DECD for approval.

**Land Use Applications:** V. McDermott reported on his appearance on behalf of TDC at the Inland Wetlands Commission meeting on 11/09/2010. The two wetlands activities within 100 ft. of the river are a change in the storm drain discharge point and upgrading the pipe at the end of East Main at the bridge. The Commission was very interested in the proposed rain gardens, pervious pavement and other infiltration measures incorporated into the plan at the recommendation of DEP at the time of the approval of the MDP. These measures are also consistent with Torrington's POCD and commitment to low impact measures. The Commission's jurisdiction is very limited as this section of Main Street is a state highway. According to McDermott, the Commission was very impressed with the low impact design and indicated that this would not constitute a "significant" activity requiring a public hearing. Per state statute, the Commission must wait until their next meeting (12/14/2010) to formally approve the plans.

A Site Plan/Special Exception Application was filed with the Planning & Zoning Commission. The application will be formally received and accepted at the meeting scheduled for December 8, 2010. Per state statute, this application will automatically be set for a public hearing in January 2011. P&Z will have jurisdiction over the proposed City Hall Avenue extension and changes to the adjacent parking lots. The Special Exception Site Plan approval will be limited to those areas since those areas are owned by the City. Wayfinding measures will be discussed going forward and signage per the recommendation of police officials.

V. Muschell reported that in anticipation of the P&Z meeting, he and B. Baxter met with Fr. Tiano and other members of the parish council to review the two applications and discuss the changes that would affect the church. The only change at this time would be ingress/egress to the parking lot owned by the church along the side of St. Peter's. There will be an entrance into the parking lot off East Main and exiting traffic will move out the back to handle circulation needed for funerals/weddings, etc. The church representatives at the meeting seemed comfortable with the concept.

**UConn Initiative:** M. Menard reported on the informal conversations that have transpired over the past few months. UConn is responding to a request put forth by Rep. Roberta Willis a year ago to get some attention on the local campus. Barry Feldman of UConn has been the primary driver of the effort to date based on his belief that local campuses have an obligation to play a role in their local communities. He has been discussing how to best partner with TDC and the City to see what UConn can bring to the table in a meaningful way. UConn has already undertaken at least one other initiative with a similar place-specific mission, and they are in the process of hiring a consultant to conduct a study of best practices from other cities (e.g., Savannah and North Adams) to avoid missteps.

C. Donaldson noted that the Litchfield County Compact (an EDC initiative) has been dormant for some time. Discussion of the success of the Berkshire Compact in terms of economic development, revitalization, arts and culture, education, public and private partnerships/developments, how to attract

students and retain them as residents was highlighted as a good example to follow. The Berkshire project has been underway for 10 years and is now into its second phase with economic revitalization as the driver. M. Menard expressed interest in revitalizing the Litchfield County Compact as a companion to the project. The Mayor emphasized that they cannot underestimate the importance and impact of Feldman's interest and activity on this initiative. UConn is willing to fund up to half of the proposed study, the TDC has made a financial commitment. The Mayor has spoken to Mr. Feldman and reported that the City is working hard to put together the funds to share in the cost of the study.

**Executive Director's Report:** B. Baxter reported that there continue to be two board vacancies due to the resignations of Vickie Patrick and James Patrick, and invited recommendations. The Executive Committee will act as the Nominating Committee for the time being. Funds on hand are in excess of \$25,000. With the resignation of Vickie Patrick, TDC has lost administration of their payables and tax preparation. Baxter will look into how to handle payables and taxes and report back. The TDC Board of Directors schedule of meetings for 2011 was reviewed.

Motion by J. Ryan to approve the TDC Board of Directors schedule of meetings for 2011 as presented. 2<sup>nd</sup> by C. Donaldson.  
Approved.

A letter was received from the Cemetery Association with a request for fencing along City Hall Avenue. The request was reviewed with M&M and J. Baer. V. McDermott noted that TDC is likely to get more requests from property owners as the project progresses and they will make note of any changes that can be incorporated.

**Website Update:** C. Donaldson reported. The committee is moving along and has agreed to use Conquest Consulting. They have gathered a lot of photos from the historical society together with new photos and will pull as much information over from the old website as possible. Property information will come from Total Valuation. The new website will go live in early 2011. S. Nocera mentioned that Marty Connor has a good collection of photos that could be used and the City uses them on its website.

**Presentation by CT Main Street:** TDC has been the member of record for the City since 2007. John Simone and Kim Parsons-Whitaker were present to speak about CT Main Street. Membership in CT Main Street includes a half-day walking tour, meeting, and summary report of observations and recommendations. In 2007, they noted that while TDC's master plan was working, they wanted more focus on the health and management of downtown. The recommendations in 2007 looked primarily to short-term initiatives and strategies that could be accomplished with public, private and government collaboration. Outreach and public relations communications was a focus and was to emphasize how downtown is the heart of the City and the region. Their biggest concern at that time getting the public involved in the conversation about the health of downtown. CT Main Street was very heartened by the investment and interest of Torrington Downtown Partners and they described two good examples of similar investment and interest in other cities (downtown Norwich and Simsbury).

S. Temkin on behalf of Torrington Downtown Partners reported on their current projects: working with Bayview Lending on their offer for two more Main Street properties, sponsoring a show together with members of the Chamber of Commerce at the Warner Theater in May and a show at the Nutmeg Conservatory. Temkin emphasized that he and all his partners want to see downtown grow and prosper and they want input from people. They have gotten a lot of good ideas to date and are actively working on acquiring property to change the unoccupied look of downtown. They are actively managing their current tenants to ensure that they are stable, and are working on a number of inquiries from businesses looking at space in their buildings. Until they close on new tenants, they have filled the windows with displays and set up temporary ventures (UConn bookstore) in the interim to remove the vacant look.

J. Lalonde asked about the façade on Water Street. Three properties (79 Main, 5 Water and 29 Water) were selected for façade improvements. Downtown Torrington Partners has submitted an application for a façade improvement grant and EDC matching funds have been appropriated. Their work on the new Bender showroom was noted as an excellent example of restoration and historical sensitivity.

C. Donaldson inquired about their apartment renovations. Temkin reported that a demolition permit has been issued along with a permit for the renovation of their first model apartment (3BR, 1100 SF). They hope their emphasis on green design and the quality of the renovation will attract young professionals to move back into town. They are in the process of conducting energy audits of all their buildings. One of their buildings shares a basement with a building on Main Street and is a 10 unit apartment with no parking. They are contemplating a use as dormitories for Nutmeg Conservatory students.

Temkin made special note of the assistance, cooperation and dedication extended by the City as they were getting all their permits and advice on available programs to help with funding.

Motion by M. Menard to adjourn.

2<sup>nd</sup> by R. Bingham.

Approved. 9:15 a.m.