

ENFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES

Thursday, June 16, 2022 – 7:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Turner called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Roll Call

Chairman Turner took the roll and present were Commissioners Gretchen Pfeifer-Hall, Mary Ann Turner, Kelly Davis, John Santanella, Steven Ragnauth, Philip Kober, Virginia Higley, and Richard Stroiney. Absent was Commissioner Marilyn Cressotti.

Also present were Nelson Tereso, Director of Economic & Community Development and Kristine Koistinen, Community Development Specialist.

Approval of Minutes

- a. May 19, 2022 – Regular Meeting

Motion: Commissioner Kober made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Stroiney, to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2022 Regular Meeting.

The motion passed with an 8-0-0 vote.

Votes: 8-0-0

Discussion Items

- a. Enfield ARPA Business Assistance Initiative

Commissioner Turner stated that it is difficult to brainstorm online and she would like them to meet in-person to work on this. Commissioner Turner went over some possible changes to meeting dates and times. She stated that she would like the Town Council to see that they put effort into this.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall asked if they are talking about a permanent meeting change or just to discuss this one issue. Commissioner Turner stated that she would like to permanently change their meeting from Thursday to Tuesday. Discussion took place regarding possible meeting dates and times, with the Commission ultimately deciding to move the meeting to the third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 PM in-person.

Mr. Tereso explained how the ARPA funds work. He provided an overview of the parameters for assistance to small businesses. Commissioner Stroiney asked if franchises are excluded, to which Mr. Tereso replied that it is non-national chains and corporations so franchises would not be considered a small business.

Commissioner Turner asked if grants are paid back, to which Mr. Tereso replied that grants are free money. Commissioner Turner stated that the grants could be for façade stuff; Mr. Tereso went over the uses for which the assistance can be utilized, including supporting payroll/benefits,

retaining employees, mortgage, rent, and other operating costs. Commissioner Turner asked how they are supposed to know that the funds are used for this. Mr. Tereso stated that there may be businesses out there taking advantage of the system.

Mr. Tereso described the types of businesses that are considered to be disproportionately impacted, including small businesses operating in Qualified Census Tracts, operated by Tribal governments or on Tribal lands, and operating in the U.S. territories. He stated that the Thompsonville district area is automatically presumed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to be eligible for assistance for expanded uses including façade and storefront improvements.

Mr. Tereso stated that they should make everything town wide to give all businesses the opportunity to apply. He stated that they need to develop what they consider to be eligible uses of funding, and keep the eligibility requirements pretty broad.

Mr. Tereso stated that the Department of the Treasury is targeting what they consider to be aid to impacted industries, and they automatically presume that the travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors are designated as impacted industries.

Commissioner Turner asked for a list of all of the businesses in Enfield so they can look at how to move forward and encourage people to apply. Mr. Tereso stated that he can see what he can do.

Commissioner Turner asked how much non-profits get, to which Mr. Tereso replied that they get \$200,000 and for-profits get \$250,000.

Commissioner Santanella stated that some small businesses are repeatedly going back for more assistance. He stated that they should be asking as part of the criteria whether the business received any PPP loans and whether they were forgiven. Commissioner Santanella stated that they should focus on the people who have not previously received assistance.

Commissioner Turner asked if there would be a way to check, to which Commissioner Santanella replied that there is a database they can check. Commissioner Stroiney stated that this would not necessarily disqualify a business, but is something to consider.

Commissioner Kober stated that the application may be better kept simple, as the bulk of work will come in evaluating the applications. He stated that they can call the applicant and request additional information. Commissioner Santanella stated that they should let people apply and see where they are, and at that point they may have to go through a second round and request additional information.

Commissioner Santanella stated that he wants it to be fair and equitable to the people who need it the most.

Commissioner Turner stated that they need to make an application that is well-rounded so everybody plays. Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that \$200,000 is not going to go that far.

Mr. Tereso stated that they need to determine how they want eligibility for the uses of the funds to go. Commissioner Turner stated that they need to get into the same room and they are not there

yet. She stated that eligibility is one of the things they will have to hash out, as well as how they are going to break up the amounts of money.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that it would be helpful to see the applications of other nearby communities. Commissioner Turner agreed, stating that they can go over them at the next meeting.

Commissioner Turner stated that they need to keep in mind that there needs to be criteria for applicants to be reporting back. Mr. Tereso stated that the criteria for reporting is very minimal. He stated that the economic hardship is already assumed to have happened and people do not need to prove it. Mr. Tereso stated that the federal government decided that it cannot handle the amount of reporting required. Commissioner Turner stated that this does not mean that they cannot ask for an answer. She stated that giving people money to pay their rent is not the best use of the money, and she wants them to do something that will bring a catalyst for the town and their business to grow and prosper.

Commissioner Turner stated that it is important that they know what businesses they have in Enfield, and she will call the assessor to get a list.

Commissioner Turner stated that they need to talk about how they are going to promote it. Mr. Tereso stated that the Journal Inquirer has offered a partnership with the town to provide grants for customized multimedia marketing solutions. Commissioner Turner stated that Mr. Tereso is there to guide them but the majority of the work should be driven by the group.

Mr. Tereso stated that there are businesses in other areas of town besides Thompsonville that are disproportionately impacted, such as the reptile place that opened during the pandemic and lost all of the school field trips due to the pandemic. Commissioner Turner stated that there are other distressed areas of town besides Thompsonville.

Commissioner Turner asked if all of the non-profits in Enfield are listed in the social services book. Mr. Tereso stated that the non-profits are done by Cindy Guerreri (Social Services) and their subcommittee. He stated that this Commission is just responsible for the \$250,000 for the small businesses.

Commissioner Stroiney stated that they need to set the expectations of what these funds are for, and then build the eligibility and qualifications around that. He stated that once they get beyond this, it opens up the door for how it is implemented.

Commissioner Turner stated that they do not want to be funding people who have already been funded. Commissioner Stroiney stated that they may still want to fund them, but the questions may be different. He stated that the simplest way is going to be the best way, and they need to decide what the questions should be.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall stated that they are not talking about a lot of money and she wants to make sure it goes to people who need it. She asked if businesses that already qualify still have to

do an application. Mr. Tereso stated that the automatically presumed disproportionately impacted businesses do not automatically get the money, and they have to apply.

Commissioner Turner stated that they will need some kind of matrix to keep the applications blinded so they can go through and rate them on a scale.

Discussion took place regarding when the Commission can next get together, with the Commission deciding to meet on Tuesday June 28, 2022 at 5:30 PM. Mr. Tereso stated that he will compile paper copies of the materials for the Commission.

Commissioner Turner stated that the POCD affects them, and requested that the Commissioners look at it.

Adjournment

Commissioner Kober made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Higley, to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned.