

## MINUTES

**Members Present:** Chair S. Ferrigno, L. Aldrich, K. Dilaj (joined meeting at 6:27 p.m.), V. Souter-Kline

**Members Absent:** A. Raggi, N. McKenney, L. Watson

**Ex-Officio Members Present:** B. Coleman, A. Moran

**Ex-Officio Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** R. Aylesworth, Town Manager; C. van Zelm, Executive Director, Mansfield Downtown Partnership; J. Stern, Administrative Assistant, Mansfield Downtown Partnership

**Others Present:** Paul W. Smith, attorney, Smith & Bishop, LLC; John Schmidt, engineer, BL Companies; Andrew Graves, architect, BL Companies; Jacob Entel, founder, Nexjen Real Estate

### 1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Ferrigno called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

### 2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

### 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was no quorum to approve the minutes.

### 4. REPORTS

#### A. Subcommittee Reports

Ferrigno said the Business Support and Outreach Subcommittee met earlier today and scheduled times next week to begin meeting with business owners to interview them about how the EDC can best support them. The Subcommittee will report any findings at the next EDC meeting.

The Governance and Development Project Review Subcommittees have not met since the previous EDC meeting.

#### B. Staff Updates

Van Zelm said the Center for EcoTechnology met with three Mansfield businesses as part of its waste reduction assessment program. Mansfield Recycling Coordinator Ginny Walton will send her a report.

Van Zelm said prior to the Town Council meeting this Monday, the Council will be honoring two of the recipients of the 2023 Taste of Mansfield Champion Awards: Chelsea Cherrier and Dennis Pierce.

Van Zelm said the brochure produced as part of the Connecticut's Countryside initiative is out to print. A promotional video for the region is being produced by consultant DKA using funds from the Eastern Regional Tourism Grant.

#### C. Business Updates (Openings / Closings)

Stern said Chase Bank opened April 11 in the former location of Bruegger's Bagels and Jamba Juice. Lego exchange store Brick Buy Brick opened the same day next to Red Rock Café.

#### D. Housing Updates

The main housing updates will be covered under items 5A and 5B.

#### **E. EDC Calendar**

There are no significant updates.

### **5. DISCUSSION ITEMS AT MEETING**

#### **A. Planning and Zoning Commission Application Referral: Special Permit Application of J. Schmitz, BL Companies (Applicant)/Yamei Development LLC (Owner) for 116 multi-family residential units and 12,000 square feet of restaurant/retail space at 1659 Storrs Road and 625 Middle Turnpike, Assessor's Parcel IDs 8.15.2 and 8.15.11**

Attorney Paul W. Smith, representing Yamei Development, LLC, said the property consists of 8.74 acres and is currently a PB-3 zone. The current tenants, including the gas station, the convenience store/Dunkin'/Pizza Mike's building, and the Hops 44/TOAST building, take up approximately 2.8 acres. The proposed project would develop the remaining 6.75 acres and would consist of two apartment buildings and one commercial building designed for retail use. The commercial building does not yet have any committed tenants. Smith noted that The Standard is directly to the north of the site and said a pedestrian access way would be built between the two complexes. The development would contain pedestrian spaces and connect to the walkways along Storrs Road.

Civil engineer John Schmitz, of BL Companies, displayed an aerial view of the area and pointed out the location of the proposed development. He then showed the site plan and highlighted the proposed locations of the three buildings and the existing access points to the property; an additional driveway is proposed at the north end of the site. There would be sidewalks, parking, and pedestrian areas throughout the development. The existing sidewalk along Storrs Road would be extended to the driveway at the north end; Schmitz also showed the location of the planned sidewalk connection with The Standard and said the sidewalk along Middle Turnpike would be extended as well. A wetland area along Storrs Road would be preserved, with sidewalks and seating around it.

Architect Andrew Graves, of BL Companies, said the developers' goals have included to use local vernacular architecture and to bring down the scale of the buildings. He displayed a rendering of the development and outlined its parking areas and pedestrian spaces. He then showed perspective and elevation views and floor plans for the proposed buildings, noting that the commercial building could house two to four tenants.

Smith said wetlands on the Standard side of the development prevent the pedestrian way along Storrs Road from being continued past the north driveway, hence the sidewalk connection within the site. Schmitz said The Standard plans to build a bridge over the brook to make this connection.

In response to questions from Coleman, Schmitz said there would be 143 parking spaces for the multi-family units out of a total of 234 spaces for the residential units. The parking is being redistributed based on peer review of the application. He briefly described the stormwater management system. Smith said the development would meet the Town's new standard of 15% affordable housing and 5% workforce housing, spread evenly throughout, for a total of 17 affordable and 6 workforce units.

In response to a question from Moran, Graves said BL Companies was involved in the design of Downtown Storrs. Moran asked how runoff from the paved parking areas would affect the wetlands. Smith said the Inland Wetlands Agency approved the development after a comprehensive review, with much attention paid to storm runoff; the stormwater system was also adjusted based on peer review.

Aylesworth asked if a connection would be added between the gas station/Dunkin' and Hops 44/TOAST parcels. Schmitz said the two parking lots would both connect to the driveway of the new

development. Aylesworth asked about outdoor seating for any restaurants in the development. Smith said the commercial building is currently designated for retail only, not restaurants; adding a restaurant would require a revision of the special use permit to address parking issues. Graves said the sidewalks would be from 18' to 25' wide.

Ferrigno asked about job creation and the impact of the development on the Grand List. Smith said he has not analyzed these issues but anticipates the development will create construction and retail jobs; the apartments would likely employ an on-site manager as well. He anticipates tax revenue from the housing units but has not investigated the specific impact on the Grand List. Ferrigno asked about the market for housing developments like this one in Mansfield. Smith said he feels the development would be economically feasible given that The Standard is being built nearby. He thinks the development could serve as a linchpin for the Town's efforts to tie the Four Corners area in with the UConn campus and could help relieve the pressure on residential neighborhoods to accommodate student housing.

Moran asked about maintenance and on-site management of the buildings. Smith said the Town requires a comprehensive maintenance plan and that there would be daily on-site management.

Coleman asked if any upgrades are planned for the existing commercial space. Smith and Schmitz said some improvements are proposed for the sidewalk along Middle Turnpike, as well as repaving the Hops 44 parking area.

**B. Planning and Zoning Commission Application Referral: Special Permit Application of CMC Storrs SPV, LLC and BPOZ 17 Cedar Swamp, LLC (Applicants/Owners), for a Multi-Family Residential Community at 497 Middle Turnpike (Assessor's Parcel ID 8.14.19) and 17 Cedar Swamp Road (Assessor's Parcel ID 8.14.18) and three parcels fronting on Cedar Swamp Road, Assessor's Parcel IDs 8.14.14-2, 8.14.14-3, and 8.14.14-4**

Jacob Entel displayed an aerial view of the area and said the site's total area is just under 64 acres; the proposed development would take place on the front 15 acres, formerly occupied by a 9-hole golf course, a restaurant, and a liquor store. He showed photos of the site and some dilapidated buildings currently there. He then showed the site plan and said 11 buildings are proposed, with a total of 262 dwellings, including traditional apartments, townhomes, and mansion-style apartments. The development would also include indoor amenities such as a fitness center, coworking space, an entertainment lounge, and a package room, as well as outdoor amenities such as a walking trail, grills, and outdoor lounges and games.

Entel displayed concepts for the three types of apartments, outlining the differences, and showed a draft rendering of the development. He then outlined the anticipated economic benefits of the development for Mansfield, adding that 25 acres would be deeded to the Town for preservation.

Moran asked if the housing would be marketed for students. Entel said the development is not intended as student housing and the hope is to attract professionals and families. Moran said concerns have been expressed about the lack of quality housing in Mansfield for young professionals, including faculty, and she finds this approach appealing. She asked about supervision and maintenance of the development. Entel said a professional management company would be engaged. The development has a minimum hold of 10 years and a management plan has been submitted with the application.

Souter-Kline expressed support for the apartment balconies and outdoor amenities. She asked if a sidewalk would be added along Middle Turnpike. Entel said the developers cannot add sidewalks off the property, but plan is to work with the State to try to add a crosswalk as there are bus stops across the road. Souter-Kline asked about electric vehicle charging spaces and the possibility of a dog park. Entel said a fenced-in area is proposed near the pond and that EV charging stations are planned.

Coleman asked about the rent for a two-bedroom apartment. Entel said the rates are not yet set, but the Town's market rates are currently around \$1,200 per bed. Coleman asked about the development's effects on traffic. Entel said civil engineering firm Langan was hired to conduct a traffic study, which was submitted with the application and concluded that the project would not cause major issues with traffic patterns. The application has been submitted to the State Department of Transportation for review as well.

Ferrigno asked about the buffer between the proposed buildings and the abutting properties. Entel said the nearest property, 17 Cedar Swamp Road, has been purchased by the applicant. The next nearest neighbor is over 100 feet from the buildings, with forest in between; other neighbors are located up a steep slope from the development, and their views would not be affected. The single-family home at 17 Cedar Swamp would remain.

Ferrigno asked about the tax revenue the project would generate. Entel said he does not know the exact tax increase. Ferrigno asked if a shuttle to the UConn campus has been considered. Entel said a shuttle will be considered depending on how many tenants commute to UConn, but there are existing shuttles nearby. The development would contain significant bike parking as well.

Van Zelm said comments from the EDC on either of these applications must be received by noon on June 14, a day before the next regular EDC meeting. Commission members discussed and expressed support for both, particularly praising the first application's connectivity to UConn and the second application's focus on professionals rather than students. Souter-Kline noted that professionals as well as students would benefit from increased connectivity with UConn.

The Commission decided by consensus to refer the two applications to the Development Project Review Subcommittee. The EDC may hold a special meeting after the Subcommittee reviews the applications for the purpose of authorizing any comments the Subcommittee makes.

### **C. Water System Advisory Committee Appointment**

Ferrigno said EDC member Lane Watson is up for renewal as the EDC's appointee to the Water System Advisory Committee and has expressed willingness to continue. There were no other volunteers. Van Zelm said the Committee on Committees will vote to reappoint him.

### **D. Business Networking Event**

Ferrigno said the EDC has been looking into scheduling a business networking event for the end of the summer. Business visits are scheduled to begin again next week, and the invitation list for the networking event will be revised accordingly.

### **E. Town/UConn Collaboration Update**

The Town/UConn framework team has not met since the last EDC meeting.

### **F. UConn Student Collaboration**

Ferrigno said a number of students and student organizations wrote letters in support of a sidewalk along Storrs Road connecting the UConn campus and Four Corners. The Town is currently waiting for updates on this initiative.

### **G. State of Connecticut Cultural Discussion**

Van Zelm said the Cultural Coalition recently held its third roundtable for Mansfield and gave a presentation on forming a cultural district. There seemed to be interest in moving the process forward. Van Zelm plans to begin working more closely with the Coalition in early fall.

## **6. COMMUNICATIONS**

All noted.

## **7. FUTURE MEETINGS**

### **A. Upcoming Meeting Schedule**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

### **B. Future Meeting Topics**

No future meeting topics were discussed.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 7:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Joshua Stern

Administrative Assistant

Mansfield Downtown Partnership, Inc.