

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Present:** A. Moran, C. Workman, J. Armstrong, R. Aylesworth (late), N. Frank (late), D. Freudmann, M. Gilbert, V. Lorenz, S. Vasington

**Staff:** L. Painter (late), C. van Zelm

**Guests:** R. Miller, EHHD Director, Sgt. K. Timme, Resident State Trooper

**Absent:** P. Aho, E. Holinko, D. Mack,

The meeting was called to order by Chair A. Moran at 1:03 PM

**1. Public Comment**

No public comment.

**2. Meeting Minutes**

C. Workman moved, J. Armstrong seconded, to approve February 9, 2021 minutes. Minutes approved.

**3. Updates**

- a. *Mansfield Downtown Partnership(MDP) / Economic Development.* C. van Zelm reported that K. Patterson is keeping businesses informed of resources. MDP is awaiting details on the restaurant relief funding to share with businesses. Several development proposals, including AgBotic and Capstone projects, are in process of being followed by EDC, with Planning Office taking the lead. A town-wide parcel book, created in cooperation with Advance CT, is half completed and will be finished this summer. It provides guidance on the development process and steps required for businesses and developers plus available parcels. The Explore Our Town guide, a brand promotional brochure, has been distributed to all local realtors throughout the area, and printed/digital format to Human Resource departments serving Eastern Connecticut State University, Windham Hospital, Town of Mansfield, Mansfield Public Schools and UConn faculty orientation. Mansfield MoviePlex at the mall is reopening, and Frog Bridge Gymnastics, Mill Court Ceramics and Fresh Fork Café are among new businesses opening in town. Strategic planning for MDP starts soon, including interviewing consultants to assist with the project.
- b. *Opportunity Zone.* Mansfield placed an ad in *Site Selection*, a national publication, marketing the Opportunity Zone to potential developers as part of a Connecticut section. Data shows 35 clicks to the web page providing additional

- information on Mansfield so far. Additional marketing through this ad will take place.
- c. *Four-Town Economic Vitality Plan.* C. van Zelm reported progress toward implementing a plan with Tolland, Bolton, Coventry and Mansfield. Subcommittees are focusing on a regional community calendar to promote events, marketing and branding the region, open space and trails mapping, and creating regional visitor destination tours. C. Workman added that the assets inventory for the region reveals there is much to include in the area's identity and that the region is diverse, but marketing economic development more challenging. There is discussion about hiring marketing professionals to assist with defining the brand. Outdoor activities like lakes and trails, and agritourism are among the most cohesive. The group is trying to determine whether to prioritize tourism or economic development. Hidden gems throughout the region are abundant, and V. Lorenz added that Bicentennial Pond is an example of an underappreciated asset in the region.
  - d. *Planning and Development.* L. Painter reported that public hearings are scheduled on two projects. April 19 the town will host a hearing on a special permit application for 358-unit housing development between CVS and Key Bank on Rte. 44. On May 5 the hearing will focus on a proposed greenhouse business on Browns Rd. The planning office has surveyed the community for input to the Affordable Housing Plan. The Planning office is rolling out programs for Mansfield residents who need assistance with childcare and food security expenses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to Congressman Courtney's invitation to submit earmark funding requests, the Town submitted a community-based proposal to expand the scope of intersection operational improvements at Rtes. 89 and 195 in Mansfield Center, and an infrastructure proposal to add a multi-use trail south from Four Corners to Tower Loop Rd. Mayor Moran expressed disappointment because she had hoped UConn would issue a letter of support for this trail in the interest of public safety of students walking this road, especially at night. C. Workman responded that there was conversation about this trail section with members of this committee and the long-term impact, but there was not enough time to meet the tight deadline with a letter of support.
  - e. *Back to School Plans for Fall at UConn.* C. Workman reported most students are leaving campus over spring break, and there are 1,500 students residing on campus until the end of the spring semester. Full plans for the community about the fall were posted in March on the [Provost's web page on the communications tab](#). Employees will be reporting back on August 16, although a task force is studying options, "[The Future of Work](#):" and "[Future of Learning](#)." Classes start August 30, with move-in dates August 27-29. Goal, under CDC guidelines, is that 93% of undergraduate classes will be in-person, and 86% of graduate level classes. Fall sports are expected to resume, and the plan is to reopen recreational facilities fully to non-residential students, all staff and faculty in the fall, too. Although vaccines cannot be required, according to CT Department of Public Health guidelines, students will be encouraged to become vaccinated and UConn will provide access if needed. The timing for two doses is complicated as

students leave campus. R. Miller added that statewide there is a plan in the works to offer private clinics for higher education institutions. M. Gilbert added that UConn is available to assist returning students in the fall. Hawley Armory continues to offer vaccines to the public through UCONN Health.

- f. *CT Murals-MLK Mural Project.* R. Aylesworth summarized the proposal by RiseUP to engage 39 communities in completing murals across Connecticut honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. before January of 2022. The Town will take the lead, and is forming a working group to involve many stakeholders, probably led by the Human Rights Commission (HRC). Director Matt Conway reports UConn has committed to match the \$7,500 from Sustainable CT, and additional private fundraising may be necessary. Six sites are being considered so far. Professional artists will be recommended by RiseUP. The goal is to hold a ribbon-cutting by Indigenous Peoples' Day on October 11. V. Lorenz will represent the HRC on the steering committee.

4. **UConn Construction Updates.** S. Vasington reported that the Northwest Science Quad construction project has progressed quickly, and the road closure continues until August 6. Visitors on campus tours have resumed, and start at the UConn bookstore until early August instead of Lodewick Visitor Center. Spirit Rock will be stored until early fall during construction in that area. At the athletic district, ballfields are all in use. UConn hockey arena construction bids are in, and groundbreaking will take place in May with completion due by December 2022. There may be impact to Separatist Road/Hunting Lodge traffic related to the arena project or other upcoming projects this summer, but the Town will be informed. Work at the Central Utility Plant will be completed in 2022. The main entrance of Public Safety complex is closed off, re-directing visitors to the rear. Auditorium Road will be reopened on May 3. Construction updates are posted on the website: [UConn.edu/construction](https://uconn.edu/construction).

5. **UConn / Town COVID-19 Update.**

- a. *Vaccine Access/Vaccination Progress.* R. Miller shared that Johnson & Johnson vaccines are paused, but it should not have a direct impact on this health district. Hawley Armory and UConn Health hosting 1,600 appointments this week. EHHD has hosted 75 clinics administering 7,500 doses. As of April 3, 22% of the entire Mansfield population has first dose coverage, or 57% of residents if not including UConn student population. Public sector school educators at local clinics is wrapping up. A homebound resident vaccination program is being implemented, now complicated by the Johnson & Johnson pause. COVID testing sites continue at Mansfield Middle School, Vernon and Tolland sites, and UConn is still providing testing for students. The group discussed the impact of lower rates of testing frequency on the positivity rates reported. A. Moran also inquired whether there was an increase after off-campus parties. R. Miller will inquire at his next meeting with UConn's student health staff.
- b. *Impact on UConn Summer programs.* C. Workman outlined that there are no major activities being hosted on campus this summer, allowing the university to

- fully ramp up for the fall return of students. Very little interest from outside groups to resume conferences, and most summer programs typically involve youth under 18. Camps will only be held outdoors.
- c. *Town Reopening Plan and Summer Activities.* R. Aylesworth reported that public library is open with shortened hours, and the Town Hall, Library and Senior Center will likely be fully open at some time in May. Given Executive Order 10E, The Town Council has agreed to push off finalizing budget decisions until the Connecticut General Assembly concludes its session and details of the American Rescue Plan are released by the Treasury Department. C. van Zelm reported that the community will host some pop-up performances and self-guided activities for National Poetry Month in Storrs Downtown. A “dine around the world” promotion featuring local restaurants will take place in May or June, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Tour de Mansfield bicycle event will take place on June 5. No concerts are scheduled for Paterson Square this summer, but at least two Moonlight Movie nights are scheduled in August. Event proposals from outside groups are being evaluated for safety protocols. The Celebrate Mansfield Festival planning committee is meeting in anticipation that it can take place in September.
  - d. *Business Impact.* C. van Zelm reported that having the university back for the spring semester was a boost to businesses in town. As reported earlier, businesses are re-opening or starting up, and business will pick up if local people are ready to start coming back out into public spaces.

## **6. Other Business.**

- a. *Student representative.* N. Frank reported this is his last meeting as he will become the new student representative on the Board of Trustees. He shared that UConn Student Government had a productive end of year. He also expressed appreciation to the Town Manager for welcoming USG to assist with Census work in town for which they received an award. Frank concluded by expressing his pleasure serving this committee.
- b. *Forbes story.* T. Moran shared that an article online from *Forbes* reported that Storrs is the poorest city in Connecticut. This is likely due to the dedicated zip code of 06279 for Storrs serving the UConn community.
- c. *UConn Dairy Bar Reopening.* M. Gilbert reported that the university is planning for resumption of in-person service at the dairy bar Thursday to Sunday. The Benton Café also sells pre-scooped UConn ice cream during museum hours.

## **7. Future Agenda Items.** None identified.

S. Vasington motioned to adjourn the meeting at 2:25 PM, seconded by J. Armstrong.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Margaret Chatey  
Administrator to the Committee  
Communications Specialist-Town of Mansfield

**Next Meeting: June 8, 2021 at 1:00 PM**