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Mayor

New Haven Development Commission

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Michael Piscitelli
Economic
Development
Administrator

Meeting Notes Regular Meeting Wednesday, October 11, 2023 Virtual Zoom-Based Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Dan McLeggon

Sarah Miller, Alder Ward 14, Aldermanic Representative

Casey Pickett

Miguel Pittman (Vice-Chair)

Sarahi Jordan-Vega (Secretary)

City Staff Present:

Michael Piscitelli, Economic Development Administrator

Carlos Eyzaguirre, Deputy Economic Development Administrator

Steve Fontana, Deputy ED

Courtney Hendricson, Deputy ED-ARPA

Helen Rosenberg, Economic Development Officer

Malachi Bridges, Economic Development Officer

Call to Order: Meeting was opened at 8:31 am by Mr. Eyzaguirre.

Approval of the Previous Minutes

Minutes were tabled to allow the Commission adequate time to review before a formal vote. NOTE: A formal quorum was established when Commissioner Pittman joined the meeting shortly after 8:30 am.

Bigelow Square

-Mr. Piscitelli provides an introduction regarding the River Street Municipal Development Plan (MDP) which was enacted in 2002. The current MDP project before the Commission pertains to the "Bigelow Square" development proposal on River Street. The proposed project was then described by Mr. Fontana and Ms. Rosenberg.



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-Steve Fontana began by orienting the Commissioners to the site, noting that he will identify specific parcels by letter, instead of their address, as they have been labeled by letter in all the previous iterations of the MDP. 190 River St., or Parcel A, was previously remediated and adaptively restored by Capasso Restoration (“Capasso”) to house the Armada Brewing Company (“Armada”). Capasso is interested in remediating the rest of the abutting sites (Parcels B, C, E) for redevelopment and activation potential.

-Ms. Rosenberg then described the new proposed DLDA, which will require the termination of the City’s previous 2017 lease with Bigelow Square LLC (“Bigelow”). The newly proposed DLDA will include the conveyance of Parcel C (198 River St) to Bigelow, upon which it will build a new 10,000 square foot light-industrial commercial building. The building will mimic the area’s brick façade aesthetic, and be built 13 feet above base flood elevation, reducing the likelihood of flooding. This commercial building will either house one larger industrial tenant, or will be partitioned into five smaller, 2,000 square feet units for start-up or smaller industrial companies. Bigelow will be allocated \$400,000 from the City to complete the remediation of Parcel C which includes the removal of contaminated soil thereby “cleaning” the site, and then filling it with new soil to allow them to commence development.

-Ms. Rosenberg also noted that the DLDA will include the long-term leases of Parcel B and E to Bigelow, who intend to remediate the also contaminated Parcel B, capping it, and turning it into a surface parking lot, servicing the consumers and employees of Armada and the new Parcel C tenant. Lastly, Bigelow will also remediate Parcel E, and turn into storage for Capasso Restoration, which is located at adjacent 34 Lloyd Street.

-Mr. Fontana highlighted that Ms. Rosenberg has secured nearly \$1.4 million in a mix of state and federal funding to assist Bigelow with remediating all the sites discussed.

Questions/Discussion

-Ms. Miller asked how Capasso Restoration (owner of Bigelow) got involved in the project and whether they responded to a formal bid/RFP.

-Mrs. Rosenberg responded, saying that Capasso was one of the only entities that expressed interest in Parcel A, before it was remediated, and developed into Armada. She noted that they have done an excellent job with that property and is confident in their ability to take on the other parcels. She also noted that Capasso was one of the only entities, who were willing to wait to remediate other parcels, while they developed Parcel A. She noted that both DECD and EPA were not funding large requests, or those “upwards of \$3-10 million.” Therefore, they could not remediate all the properties at the same time to then convey all the parcels at once, which would have been more desirable for other, less cooperative developers.

Capasso worked closely with the City and is willing to kick in some of the money and work to both remediate and develop the sites.

-Ms. Miller also asked what the outreach was like on these properties, and if they spoke to the community about their plans.

-Mr. Fontana responded that he attended community meetings, including those for the Grand Avenue Special Service District and the Grand Avenue CMT on several different occasions to discuss these plans in varying levels of detail. He also noted that this new lease agreement is a relatively recent development.

-Lastly, Mr. McCleggon asked about tax benefit differences in leasing the two parcels to Bigelow instead of selling those parcels.

-Mrs. Rosenberg responde that even though Bigelow is leasing the parcels, it will still pay property taxes. When explaining why she recommended the City retain parcels B & E, she highlighted liability purposes for conveying environmentally contaminated properties. Those parcels are heavily contaminated with PCBs and the City felt it was important they were cleaned and capped so they are contained and no longer a danger to those that use the surface lot.

-Based on recommendation from the Commissioners it was ultimately decided to not have a vote on the resolutions pertaining to the DLDA's and leases before the Commission this month to allow the City to have more time to present the project to groups like the Fair Haven CMT and the River St merchant group as well as to allow the Commissioners more time to digest all the material presented to them.

-City staff suggested a schedule whereby the Commission would vote on the items at its October meeting

Economic Development Updates

-Mr. Eyzaguirre provided an update on ARPA-funded programming including Cultural Affairs' Black Wall Street, which saw a three-fold increase in vendor participation this year. Also, Mr Eyzaguirre spoke on the Neighborhood Equity Opportunity Challenge Grant, for which \$891,000 was awarded to applicants from all over the city to conduct physical improvements or undertake new programming in New Haven's neighborhoods that bolster economic vitality and vibrancy.

- Finally, Mr. Eyzaguirre spoke on the City's ARPA-funded Career Pathways Strategic Planning initiative. A consultant was recently selected via RFP to lead the planning and implementation of an overarching Career Pathways strategy that includes a potential training academy. The City team is planning a "design sprint" with the consultant, at which they will convene a host of stakeholders and experts in the field to brainstorm strategic plan implementation.

Adjournment:

Mr. Eyzaguirre adjourned the meeting. at 9:25 am.

