

**Economic Development Committee**

Minutes

Tuesday, November 1, 2022

8:30a.m.

Town Hall Conference Room

**Present:** First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, Treasurer Wes Higgins, Susan Clark, Chris Hocker, Claudio Rodrigo, Ed Miller, Kate Perry, Richard Wenning. Members of the public: Laura Gibbons

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Richard Wenning at 8:38 a.m.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved unanimously with no additions.

**3. Approval of September 29 Minutes**

Rich Wenning noted that the minutes from last meeting were not yet ready but would be forwarded ASAP. Wenning also noted that the Committee members had reached a consensus on meeting the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month at 8:30am.

**4. Discussion and action on Draft Committee Charter**

The Committee discussed the draft Charter. Susan Clark and Kate Perry proposed amendments to the second sentence of the last paragraph of the first page to better reflect the history of Georgetown. The amended sentence reads:

“Redding has not had a downtown or a walkable village center since the changes in Georgetown brought about by the construction of Route 107 and, later, the decline and demise of the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill.”

The Committee approved the charter unanimously as amended and agreed to submit to the Board of Selectman for their approval at their next meeting on November 21. The full charter appears at the bottom of these minutes together with a public discussion draft that expands upon the priority areas identified.

**5. Discussion of Ad Hoc Working Groups and Leads**

Rich Wenning introduced the discussion topic of forming ad-hoc working groups with EDC leads to advance the Committee’s five priority areas and gather community input. The committee members discussed the need for the ad-hoc work groups to be fluid and informal and to be used to gather community opinions, conduct research, surface competing priorities and funnel these to the EDC for their consideration in their monthly public meetings.

EDC members will begin to meet with community members to share the discussion draft for feedback and identify individuals that want to volunteer to support the activities of the ad-hoc workgroups. EDC members will bring back the perspectives they gathered for discussion at the next meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup>. The initial ad-hoc working groups include:

- Small Business Development (Kate Perry, Wes Higgins, Chris Hocker, Claudio Rodrigo)
- Development in Georgetown (Claudio Rodrigo, Kate Perry, Wes Higgins)
- Development in West Redding (Ed Miller, Chris Hocker)
- Housing (Susan Clark, Chris Hocker)

Rich Wenning noted that he had an opportunity to meet with several residents and business owners in Georgetown and West Redding to share the discussion drafts and discuss their feedback. There was a clear interest in expressing their local priorities and interest in being involved. Wenning noted that there were multiple housing development efforts underway in town and one question that came up was how the Town could approach opportunities for public-private improvements in such cases, especially where Town land abuts new housing efforts.

#### **6. Discussion of Community Engagement & Communications Channels**

The Committee discussed the need for using multiple communication channels. The EDC members agreed that improvements were needed to the Town Website to better communicate with transparency about the EDC and Gilbert & Bennett Committee so that any community member had ready access to content. The Chair agreed to work with the First Selectman on ways to accomplish that. Susan Clark noted that the Redding Sentinel would highlight newsworthy EDC activities and progress. Susan Clark also discussed the benefits of working with the various organizations in town to get the word out to their members and direct input to the EDC. The Committee members discussed the pros and cons of social media and agreed that use of social media channels could be helpful in publicizing certain content.

#### **7. Member comments**

Rich Wenning noted that the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Committee was conducting a site visit of remediation sites at the Wire Mill on Friday at 2pm. EDC Members are invited to attend.

Rich Wenning also reminded the Committee that they had agreed on a consensus day and time for EDC monthly public meetings: **1st Tuesday of each month at 8:30am**. The next meetings will be Dec 6 and January 3. Wenning will get these publicly noticed with the Town Clerk.

#### **8. Public comments: None**

#### **9. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:47 a.m.  
Submitted by Richard Wenning, Chair

**Town of Redding**  
**Economic Development Committee Charter**  
**November 1, 2022**

The Economic Development Committee (EDC) is a seven-member advisory committee to the Board of Selectmen. Its purpose is to help town officials prioritize and advance community-supported actions to promote economic development in the short and longer term. The Committee will engage the community at large in its work and coordinate regularly with relevant Town of Redding officials, commissions, and committees, including the Gilbert and Bennett Advisory Committee. The Committee can be reached at [edc@townofreddingct.org](mailto:edc@townofreddingct.org) or by mail at PO Box 1028, Redding, CT 06875.

The Redding residents appointed by the Board of Selectmen as Committee members include:

1. Susan Clark, Publisher, Redding Sentinel
2. Wes Higgins, Town Treasurer
3. Chris Hocker, Vice President, PowerBridge LLC
4. Edward Miller, General Counsel & Secretary at AlloVir, Inc.
5. Kate Perry, Georgetown Village Restoration, Inc.
6. Claudio Rodrigo, Retired Operations Executive
7. Richard Wenning, Executive Director, Be Foundation (Chair)

The Committee has reviewed the priorities established in the 2020 Town Plan for Conservation and Development as adopted by the Board of Selectmen and affirms its vision and goals. The Committee seeks to build upon prior planning and adopted recommendations wherever feasible to bring them to community visibility and action. We intend this document as a step in that direction and hope it will spark community discussions and momentum around priorities for advocacy, action, and implementation.

The Town Plan focuses on conserving the town's scenic, cultural, and historic heritage to ensure a semi-rural residential community. One in which the natural environment is protected, historic and cultural resources are preserved, the water supply watershed and Saugatuck Forest are preserved as a boon to the entire region and as a legacy for future generations, and Georgetown village is brought to its full potential as a diverse hub of activity.

The Plan also seeks to limit new commercial development to existing centers in Georgetown and West Redding. Redding has not had a downtown or a walkable village center since the changes in Georgetown brought about by the construction of Route 107 and, later, the decline and demise of the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill. Bringing those about are purposes of designing a transit-oriented hub in Georgetown, which would satisfy several social, commercial and revenue needs, while creating an attractive and noteworthy gateway to our community.

The Committee has identified five priority areas associated with economic development in Redding, each of which will have shorter- and longer-term elements. Each priority area may be supported by ad hoc working groups comprised of EDC members and other residents and business owners.

1. For-Profit and Non-Profit Small Business Development
2. Development in Georgetown
3. Development in West Redding
4. Housing that Meets the Needs of Redding's Residents and Workforce, including Workers from Home
5. Transportation that Supports Redding's Residential and Business Needs

The Committee welcomes input and questions from the community about these priorities. Forthcoming communications will describe initial recommendations for action under each of the priority areas. Please reach out to us by email at [edc@townofreddingct.org](mailto:edc@townofreddingct.org) or by mail at PO Box 1028, Redding CT 06875.

**Town of Redding**  
**Economic Development Committee Priorities**  
**Public Discussion Draft – November 1, 2022**

The Economic Development Committee (EDC) is a seven-member advisory committee to the Board of Selectmen. Its purpose is to help town officials prioritize and advance community-supported actions to promote economic development in the short and longer term. The Committee will engage the community at large in its work and coordinate regularly with relevant Town of Redding officials, commissions, and committees, including the Gilbert and Bennett Advisory Committee. The Committee can be reached at [edc@townofreddingct.org](mailto:edc@townofreddingct.org) or by mail at PO Box 1028, Redding, CT 06875.

The Committee charter establishes five key priorities associated with economic development, each of which will have shorter- and longer-term elements. Each priority area may be supported by ad hoc working groups comprised of EDC members and other residents and business owners. The Committee has selected an initial set of recommendations for study or action derived from Committee discussions and the Town Plan for Conservation and Development.

**1. For-Profit and Non-Profit Small Business Development**

- a. Examine the business climate and opportunities for physical businesses and remote working and small home and cottage businesses.
- b. Strengthen communications about business opportunities and the key steps to open and operate successful businesses in Redding.
- c. Determine how best to re-establish a Redding small business affinity group acknowledging specific Georgetown and West-Redding business development interests.
- d. Gather and review all relevant work products that impact future economic development, including the existing Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WESTCOG) Economic Development Strategy (2017-2022), providing input to the revised strategy.
- e. Review zoning and other regulations and Town processes to identify obstacles to economic development.
- f. Study the logistics, costs, and benefits to the town of developing renewable energy sources at sites around town. (8-19)<sup>1</sup>
- g. Encourage and provide continued support for public interest organizations. (6-7)

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers in parentheses following recommendations indicate location in the Town Plan for easy cross-referencing.

## **2. Development in Georgetown**

- a. Continue to support the economic and cultural revitalization of central Georgetown including the Main Street/Old Mill Road enhancement.
- b. Preserve the historic mill buildings to the extent possible and explore efforts to create a Village District zoning overlay as defined by State enabling legislation to assist in the preservation efforts. (10-6)
- c. Examine the economic and community benefits of interim use cases and sequenced development for the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property.
- d. Examine different models for commercial use of the site (10-4) and how other towns and cities across the state have redeveloped mill properties successfully. (10-5)
- e. Consider the use of portions of the Gilbert & Bennett site as parkland, and public or municipal uses for the site should be studied as solutions to the ultimate disposition of the vacant acreage.
- f. Make the Norwalk River and the Factory Pond and waterfall as visible and publicly accessible as possible.
- g. Consider the long-discussed footbridge over the river from the area south of Route 107 and west of the Norwalk River, designated for a parking lot, which would alleviate parking limitations for businesses along Main Street and Old Mill Road. This parking area would also serve a new ConnDOT-approved rail station to serve Georgetown (see 5 below).
- h. Develop a new, comprehensive, appropriate plan in harmony with the spirit of the now defunct Master Plan, one which arose from the considered, public charrette process. (6.3)
- i. Develop information on trends that will inform long-term planning, including real estate, demographics, areas of interest for needed amenities from both existing town residents and populations representing future residents. (10-1)

## **3. Development in West Redding**

- a. Encourage redevelopment of the existing central area of West Redding within an environmentally sensitive scale, to realize its full potential for commercial activity as well as for a wider variety of housing needs than are presently served.

- b. Study and monitor development efforts underway to understand their fit with Town of Redding priorities.
- c. Draw upon West Redding's existing infrastructure and transportation resources, and existing commercial uses, in a creative way for potential "smart growth" development including transit-oriented projects. (6.4)
- d. Encourage formation of a West Redding business and property owners' group to forge consensus and a commitment to beautify the structures and to collaborate with the Town in seeking State aid for further improvements. (6.10)
- e. Identify state and private funding sources available for landscaping, pedestrian paths, and other improvements to the West Redding setting so as to refresh the area and improve the circulation of people to the business center. (6.11)
- f. Examine the potential for a pedestrian path linking the West Redding train station with the business district to the east. The most direct path lies on Aquarion land and is situated in a floodway. (7-13)

**4. Housing that Meets the Needs of Redding's Residents and Workforce, including Workers from Home**

- a. Develop scenarios to support affordable housing that meet our environmental stewardship obligations.
- b. Explore the housing mix desired for the Georgetown Historic District and the costs and benefits of different governance scenarios for achieving it, such as creation of a housing authority.
- c. Work with State legislators to exclude proposed high-density land use projects from the public water supply watersheds. (2-10) (3-2) (9-3)
- d. Study how use of Incentive Housing Zones under the Connecticut Housing Program for Economic Growth could foster Affordable Housing consistent with other planning priorities of the town. (3.6)
- e. Examine the potential for non-profit development on Town-owned land to assure maximum affordability and minimum environmental risk. (3-6)

- f. Survey Existing Lower-Cost Housing Units to obtain the accurate number of dwelling units for rent or sale in Redding, that meet the cost-of- housing standards of the State of Connecticut's Affordable Housing programs. (9-4)

## **5. Transportation that Supports Redding's Residential and Business Needs**

- a. Support upgrading of commuter rail service, private van pooling, and other forms of mass or shared transportation that reduce private automobile dependence. (7-3)
- b. Research possible sites for additional commuter parking facilities at key locations. (7-3)
- c. Plan and support pedestrian paths, bikeways and greenways for non-motorized travel wherever feasible. (7-3)
- d. Examine the best location for the planned rail station in Georgetown. The currently planned location south of Route 107 is favorable in terms of parking that could also serve the Main Street/Old Mill Rd. area, and such parking may be the only use for this portion of the site due to high level of capped in-ground contaminants. However, regional transportation needs may be better served with better ingress/egress at a more northerly location on the Wire Mill site. (10-2)
- e. Review plans for Route 7 and Danbury Train Line improvements. Examine how needed improvements to the Danbury Line are defined and could be funded.
- f. Support State and Regional classification of existing Routes 7 and 25 as Major Arterial Roads, and seek reclassification of Routes 53, 57, 58 and 107 as Minor Collectors.
- g. Investigate return of selected State roads to Town control, especially where predominantly residential in character. (7-1)
- h. Study the potential costs and benefits of installation of electric vehicle charging points at suitable locations around town. (8-20)
- i. Seek traffic calming measures on State and Local roads. Where appropriate, support Town traffic calming action, including optical lane narrowing strategies, physical speed control features, signage, signals, and "T" intersections wherever feasible. (7-4)

The Committee welcomes input and questions from the community about these priorities. Forthcoming communications will describe initial recommendations for action under each of the priority areas. Please reach out to us by email at [edc@townofreddingct.org](mailto:edc@townofreddingct.org) or by mail at PO Box 1028, Redding, CT 06875.