



Justin Elicker
Mayor

New Haven Development Commission

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Michael Piscitelli
Economic
Development
Administrator

Minutes
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, April 9, 2025
In-Person/Online Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Manmita Dutta
Dan McLeggon
Casey Pickett
Caroline Tanbee Smith, Aldermanic Representative
Charles Negaro Sr.
Dirk Bergemann
Miguel Pittman

Guests:

Doug Hausladen, Executive Director -New Haven Parking Authority
Keith Mahler – CEO, Premier Facilities

City Staff Present:

Mike Piscitelli, Economic Development Administrator
Carlos Eyzaguirre, Deputy Economic Development Administrator
Mark Wilson, Manager, Neighborhood Commercial Development
Malachi Bridges, Economic Development Officer

Call to Order: Meeting opened at 8:30 am

1. Review of Previous Minutes:

- C. Eyzaguirre commented previous meeting minutes were sent out late and suggested either reading them now or tabling the minutes. He then suggested tabling them until next month.

- Commissioner Pittman made said motion, and it was accepted. Minutes will be sent earlier going forward now that staffing shortage has been addressed.

2. Election of Officers:

- Commissioner Dutta stated that the Commission is nominating Commissioner Pittman as Chair, Commissioner Pickett as Vice Chair and Commissioner Dutta as Secretary.
- Mr. Eyzaguirre asked if there is any discussion, then proposed a Motion on the floor to accept, which was seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Keith Mahler – Westville Music Bowl (WMB)/College St. Music Hall (CSMH)

- Mr Eyzaguirre provided background on the two venues. He noted that both venues had been vacant for many years before Mr. Mahler, a renowned music promoter, revived them and began drawing world class popular music acts to them. The positive impact they have had on the city, both Downtown and citywide, has been significant. An economic impact study conducted on the two venues noted an ~\$51m infusion into the local economy as well as the creation of ~900 jobs.
- Mr. Mahler introduced himself and briefly explained the management structure of his companies (Premier Facilities) which manage both venues via long term contracts
- Mr. Mahler's noted that his team had been approached numerous times over the years about revitalizing CSMH (previously the Palace Theatre) which finally came to fruition in 2014 with support from institutional partners like the City of New Haven and Yale.
- He and his team produce 80-90 shows a year but the competition is intense with other large promoters like Live Nation also competing for the same acts regionally. Mr. Mahler likened it to a "David vs. Goliath" situation.
- In 2019, Mr. Mahler began working with the City, Yale and the Tennis Foundation of CT to turn the 13,000 seat Connecticut Tennis Center into a concert venue. A long term lease was signed in late 2019 with Yale and the Tennis Foundation to allow Mahler's company to activate the venue. Mr. Mahler added that once his team gained site control there was much more deterioration and subsequent repair than initially expected. The venue's opening was slowed by the onset of the pandemic in 2020 but by 2021 it was hosting upwards of 40 concerts a year.

- Mr. Mahler noted that it was now a top-flight concert venue with state-of-the-art lighting, audio and LED video system and had brought back New Haven as a top flight tour stop for musical acts the world over.
- Commissioner discussion centered on ticket price: why are they now so high, how concert venues generate revenue, and the overall economic impact.

4. Economic Development Updates

- Update on Outdoor Dining – online licensing portal now open on City’s City Squared platform. City staff is arranged in a team to be supportive of businesses as they navigate the process which requires sign off from City departments. Businesses encouraged to participate in the program
- City Ordinance regulating smoke shops was recently adopted by the Board of Alders. This will limit the amount of smoke shops that can open in the City based on new distance requirements prohibiting new retailers of tobacco or vapor products from opening within 1,000 feet of schools, places of worship, or public parks, and within 3,000 feet of existing such retailers. Such businesses will also be required to obtain a municipal license.
- Citywide vacant storefront survey conducted by City staff is complete. Results showed the first reduction in vacancy since COVID. Most neighborhood commercial districts maintained low vacancy rates despite post-pandemic challenges and other local and national headwinds. Mr. Eyzaguirre noted that there will be a continued focus on neighborhood commercial businesses supported by staff and expansion of programs like the Leasehold Improvement Program.
- C. Eyzaguirre responded to questions on staffing by noting that there are several new hires at Economic Development over the past few months who will work on both new and existing initiatives.
- Commissioner Negro questioned how the City is addressing existing retail vacancies especially in mixed-use buildings. Mr. Bridges responded that the City is working on a database where it can track the size and/or location of building vacancies.
- Mr. Eyzaguirre commented that filling retail vacancies can be challenging for the City especially in privately-owned buildings but they do rely on local industry leader contacts that have specific expertise in attracting potentially successful businesses to vacant commercial locations.
- The Dewitt Street Townhomes in the Hill, a public-private partnership between the City and an affordable housing developer, passed its final inspection recently, thereby allowing ~70 new units of affordable housing to come back online.

- Via NHV, a state-funded micro transit service offering \$1.75 rides much like Uber, is now available in New Haven. The coverage area is currently limited to areas where residents needs it most based on car ownership data and other similar factors with a goal of going citywide if successful.
- Progress update on the two State and George redevelopment (“sites A & B”) was given by Mr Wilson. Still working towards a formal DLDA for approval by NHDC and the Board of Alders in the coming months.
- Motion to close meeting by Commissioner Pittman. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:45 am.