



Justin Elicker
Mayor

New Haven Development Commission

165 Church Street, New Haven, Connecticut
06510
Phone: (203) 946-2366 Fax: (203) 946-2391



Michael Piscitelli
*Economic
Development
Administrator*

Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
Wednesday 5/14/2025,
In Person/Online Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

City and EDC Staff Present:

Mike Piscitelli, Economic Development Administrator
Carlos Eyzaguirre, Deputy Economic Development Administrator
Mark Wilson, Manager, Neighborhood Commercial Development
Malachi Bridges, Economic Development Officer
Dean Mack, Deputy Director. Economic Development
Ginny Kozlowski, CEO, EDC of New Haven

Call to Order

The meeting was opened by Comm. Pittman at approximately 8:30 am.

Approval of the Previous Minutes

Minutes were unanimously approved (Comm. Pittman made the motion; seconded by Comm. McLeggon; unanimously approved)

Executive Session:

A motion was made by Comm. Pickett and seconded by Comm. McLeggon to enter into Executive Session to address a real estate matter. Motion was approved unanimously. Executive Session began after Ms. Kozlowski went into the virtual waiting room.

The Executive Session ended with no vote and remained open.

Economic Development Updates:

Outdoor Dining

- Mr. Eyzaguirre discussed an increase in interest in outdoor dining/seating which requires a license (approximately 40 businesses were either approved or nearing final approval). Members of the meeting were asked to reach out to their business contacts or friends and let them know that City staff is available to help them through that licensing process.
- Alder Tanbee Smith asked if there was an ability to prorate the license fees for businesses new who were not licensed in April due to new requirements for businesses who had not previously participated in the program (businesses who had participated in the program previously were grandfathered in under the previous requirements for this season only).
- Alder Tanbee Smith also wondered if there could be a working group put together in advance of next year's outdoor seating season to help them walk businesses through the process, and further increase participation citywide? She also noted that some businesses she has met with are willing to help with the process and lend their perspective.
- City staff agreed to investigate the fee request and were amenable to putting together a working group as suggested.

Farmington Canal

- Mr. Eyzaguirre mentioned the opening of the final phase of the Canal in New Haven (running underneath Whitney and Grove Streets) which has its terminus at Long Wharf. This generated significant excitement as it was perhaps the most urban section of New Haven's portion of the Canal and was a long process requiring multiple easements. Early returns on usage have been positive.

Christain Community Action (CCA):

- Mr. Eyzaguirre noted the dedication of a street corner at Davenport and Ward in the Hill to long time CCA Executive Director Bonita Grubbs who recently retired and is a great asset to the community.
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"Grander Avenue" streetscape project

- Mr. Eyzaguirre discussed the public workshop recently held at Fame Academy to introduce the \$7 million dollar, Challenge Grant-enabled redo of the Grand Avenue streetscape and roadway. About 50 people attended. The City team is currently soliciting input from the community and are currently at 10% design, aiming to reach 30% design by the fall. The goal is to be in construction by early 2026 to improve the entire 1.5 mile stretch of Grand Avenue.
- Mr. Piscitelli then discussed some of the key aspects relating to this project including the Poplar Street parking lot and the roundabout at Ferry and Grant. He then mentioned community feedback on the stretch of Grand Avenue from Mill River to Downtown and suggested that we continue to put thought into this part of the project.
- Mr. Eyzaguirre then reminded that this project is in concert with the Ferry Street roadway project which will address the entirety of Ferry Street and get underway at about the same time.

Small Business Openings

- Mr. Eyzaguirre highlighted the ribbon cutting of FEPO Cafe and Bakery at 195 Church Street which filled the café space that had been vacant for several years and was formerly occupied by Starbucks .
- Mr. Eyzaguirre then discussed the grand opening of “LIT New Haven” a marijuana dispensary owned by Kebra Smith-Bolden, a trailblazing Black cannabis entrepreneur who is also a registered nurse with a background in medical marijuana. He noted the shop’s location on East Street is located away from schools and churches.
- Mr. Eyzaguirre also noted the ribbon cutting at Farm Belly, a gourmet breakfast place run by a married New Haven couple who previously ran a popular catering truck with the same name. They are taking space in one of the City’s oldest commercial buildings at 20 Grand Avenue in Fair Haven and have generated a lot of excitement both in Fair Haven and citywide
- Alder Tanbee Smith then discussed events that took place during National Small Business Week. A press conference was held at Taqueria Oyameles on Lombard St and Ferry Ave in Fair Haven where the City team and Alders with the help from a few other Latino-owned small businesses highlighted the different resources available for New Haven businesses that are trying to grow or get started. Alder Tanbee Smith mentioned how thrilled Taqueria Oyameles was to host this event and the importance of looking for more gems like this one to highlight as well as host future events.
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New Haven United FC begins play in New Haven

- Mr. Piscitelli spoke about the opening game for New Haven United, a semi-professional soccer team owned by Jason Price of NXTHVN who hosted a press conference earlier in the month to announce the team. They have their first game tonight at Reece Stadium in the Yale Athletic Complex. New Haven United is a 4th tier MLS team, but this leaves opportunity for improvement and a lot of space for the fan base to grow. There are two upcoming Saturday Games that are being promoted at the upcoming Night Market. He then mentioned a prior New Haven professional soccer team, the New Haven Express, who won their league and had a devoted fanbase so there is a lot of potential with this team.

Innovation Cluster

- Mr. Piscitelli provided a monthly update on the City’s Innovation Cluster application that was submitted to DECD earlier this year to help advance the next round of infrastructure improvements at Downtown Crossing and beyond. Some of the early design work mentions a new arching bridge on Church Street compared to the flat overpass style-one you see today. This is a relatively low-cost improvement that can drastically change the district. He then went on to note that the development of this district is not done and these newly imagined infrastructure improvements can be a great way to show its continued growth. The City team will know more about the application’s success in the coming months.
- Comm. Bergemann applauded this effort and stated that he is very happy to see these types of ambitious projects put forth.

State and George Redevelopment (Site A)

- This project has been covered often in recent Commission meetings, but the main takeaway for this month is the City is close to agreeing to terms with the selected developer Gilbane on a multi phase mixed-use development on the parking lots and other underutilized land on lower State Street. The City team expects to have the developers back at an upcoming meeting to provide a project update.

River Street RFQ

- Mr. Piscitelli provided an update on this RFQ for 100 and 142 River Street. He noted two very good proposals were submitted and City reviewers are going through a second layer of due diligence before moving forward on a selected developer. He noted that Mr. Bridges has been doing great work managing this project.

Discussion

- Mr Hausladen reminded the Commission about the Procurement Fair led by the City's Purchasing Department later in the day, his team at Park New Haven will be in attendance. The goal is to spread the word on how local businesses can access City contracts of all kinds
- Mr. Piscitelli responded that City economic development staff would be well-represented and encouraged others to attend.

Adjournment:

- The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:41 am.