



Town of Wallingford
Economic Development Commission
45 South Main Street, Room 311
Wallingford, CT 06492

RETENTION/INCENTIVE COMMITTEE

Economic Development Commission

Special Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Town Hall, Room 116
45 South Main Street
Wallingford, CT

The Retention & Incentive Committee special meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Chair Fappiano. Committee members Fappiano and Preneta, as well as staff member Ryan, were in attendance.

1. Discussion and possible action on September 24, 2021 special virtual meeting minutes - The minutes as presented were approved unanimously.
2. American Rescue Plan Act - Update: Ryan distributed copies of the draft for the ARPA application for small businesses for review. Ryan informed the committee that the town has hired UHY as a consultant to assist with the accounting and reporting aspects of the ARPA application process. The committee is in agreement that it was very important that the town hired a consultant to assist with the ARPA process. Staff also noted that all UHY fees will be paid through the ARPA funds.
 - The committee had a discussion regarding how broad the acceptable uses for these funds are, but that Wallingford has chosen to focus on three (3) main categories for the first round of distribution of funds. These three (3) categories are small businesses (25 FTE employees or less), non-profits, and households. Each application that is submitted will initially go directly to UHY for review to confirm that all sections are complete and all additional documents have been received. If any parts of the application are incomplete or additional documents are needed UHY will contact the applicant directly. Once UHY has completed their review of the application it will be submitted to the appropriate group of representatives that will be selected by the mayor for review.
 - Once the initial applications have been vetted and approved, the town will revisit other community and municipal projects for the use of any remaining funds. The town has to commit the funds by 2024 and distribute the funds by 2026.
 - Staff stated that they are hopeful to get a final small business application completed by Mid-February. There will be a paper form with an online option for submitting the applications. One major concern with the online application process is that once you start the application, the applicant will not be able to save and return at a later time to finish, which is a limitation of UHY software.
 - Law department is working on the Acknowledgement portion of the application which includes attestations, signatures, and other legal elements. The committee asked to see that portion of the application once completed. Staff will forward to the committee upon receipt for review.

3. **2022 Legislative Priorities - Review:** The Legislative Delegation Meeting took place on January 7, 2022; due to snow the only legislator that attended was Craig Fishbein. All other legislators received the town's Legislative Booklet through the mail.
- The committee agrees that the most important priority is "Mobilizing Our Workforce". Our Labor Participation Rate (willingness to work) is at a 45 year low. The committee is in agreement that the state needs to eliminate the barriers that disincentivize people to work. The committee discussed "ghosting" as a problem with employers and the Department of Labor. The committee feels that Workforce Development training program attendance should be a qualification for those looking to receive unemployment benefits. Preneta stated that the first step to mobilizing the workforce is to fix the issues with unemployment benefits.
 - The committee discussed the Unemployment Trust Fund. Staff stated that this fund is 100% funded by businesses. The fund was emptied during COVID and money was borrowed from the federal government so benefits could continue to be paid. Some of this fund was replenished with state ARPA funds. The committee agreed that the state should use ARPA funds to replenish the Unemployment Trust fund in full including the repayment of principal and interest to the federal government.
4. **Incentive Programs - Update:** Staff reviewed the existing Incentive programs that are available through the town.
- Electric Rate Discount Program – Town Center businesses can apply for discounted electric rates for a five (5) year term. Year 1 at 50%, Year 2 at 40%, Year 3 at 30%, etc... There have been several businesses that have applied for this program in 2021.
 - Personal Property Tax Incentive for Manufacturers – no applicants
 - Real Property Tax Incentive for Manufacturers – no applicants
 - Real Property Tax Incentive for the Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ) – no applicants
 - Real Property Tax Incentive for Office Development – no applicants
 - These Incentive Programs do not expire until 2023, will revisit at a later time.
 - Preneta mentioned that it would be nice to begin Company Visits again. Fappiano and Ryan agreed and stated that they hope to resume company visits once COVID subsides.
 - Fappiano questioned the feasibility of converting vacant office space to light manufacturing uses. Ryan stated that several buildings have already been converted, but added that retro-fitting is hard to do in most office spaces. Brokers that focus on office space are working diligently to try and solve the issue of office space vacancies.

5. **Next meeting - No meeting scheduled**

By unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

c: Town Clerk
Staff
ec: Website