

*Robert J. Cook*

2020 DEC -8 A 11:39

MICROSOFT "TEAMS"  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

TOWN CLERK  
EAST HARTFORD

DECEMBER 3, 2020

PRESENT Don Bell, Chair; Councillors Angie Parkinson and Pat Harmon

ALSO  
PRESENT Marcia Leclerc, Mayor  
Eileen Buckheit, Development Director  
Sarah Morgan, Library Director  
Amy Peltier, Director, East Hartford CONNECTs  
Jessica Carrero, Assistant to the Mayor

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bell called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 27, 2020

MOTION By Angie Parkinson  
seconded by Pat Harmon  
to **approve** the minutes of the January 27, 2020 Community Engagement  
Committee meeting.  
Motion carried 3/0.

OPPORTUNITY FOR RESIDENTS TO SPEAK

None

NEW BUSINESS

Forward East Hartford Goals & Economic Opportunity

Chair Don Bell recapped the events leading up to this meeting:

- Citizen-led protests
- Community conversations
- Declaration of racism as a public health emergency

Chair Bell outlined the scope and goals of Forward East Hartford, and procedures for future meetings.

Overview of Town Government Efforts to Increase Economic Opportunity

Mayor Leclerc, Development Director Eileen Buckheit, Library Director Sarah Morgan and Director of East Hartford CONNECTs Amy Peltier provided insight on the various efforts the town makes to increase economic opportunities.

Development Department: Eileen Buckheit, Director, the Town Planner and the Planner's assistant is the core of the Development Department. Due to the size of this department, the town has to partner with community organizations, of which there are many.

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money this year received by the town was \$400,000:

- Some goes to salaries
- Some goes to community organizations...the last resort (when state help is exhausted) to keep people from homelessness and/or disaster
- Interval House
- EH Interfaith ministries
- Support for modernization of owner-occupied homes in low-income census tracts. The town expanded this program to include some facade improvements.

The town assists people who have credit problems by putting people in touch with alternate funding sources. Currently, the town is not "forward thinking" as far as helping People of Color-owned businesses, but the town is certainly not impeding it either.

- The town works with Pratt & Whitney to make sure they're hiring People of Color-owned businesses, etc.
- State of CT offers many programs for small business startups, strategic planning sessions for small businesses at the library
- The Town uses partners to do many of these goals currently.
- The Development Department refers individuals to these partners:
  - ✓ CT Small Business Center - has an office in East Hartford. The SBC partners with SBA and SBDC. They are statewide, run through UCONN. They operate in regional hubs
  - ✓ CEDF - helps businesses get into traditional financing
  - ✓ DECD and CARES Act funding
- **Land Use Group** - free standing meeting for applicants, where town talks people through the process they need to do to get going vis a vis the town, including zoning, wetlands, parking spot requirements, building dept. rules, and police/fire are there too, etc.
  - ✓ Then they go to site plan review, followed by P&Z. By the time they get there, they're thoroughly vetted
  - ✓ More seminars are in the works; town has reached out to Amy Peltier b/c she has good connections with the community
  - ✓ Mayor and town planner, police chief, fire chief/marshal go out to meet new business owners
  - ✓ We can give them CDBG money sometimes too, for example we helped a bakery get a new sign as they opened, and we helped fund a facade improvement for another business on Governor St.
- **Working Cities Challenge** - allowed us to hire Amy Peltier full time, but the grant is almost up. So we're connecting her with the BoE, and allocating CARES Act money to keep these programs running
  - ✓ We're working to bring minority youth into the police and fire

depts, since these are good-paying jobs and there's a lack of diversity across the state when it comes to first responders. We're pushing the state to address this at their level

- **Capital Workforce Partners** - Marcia serves on the board
  - ✓ they're facilitating the hiring of local kids, guiding the kids through the whole process and following up to make sure it's a success
- **EH Connects** - motto is "educate, engage, employ"
  - ✓ Got a grant from CHIFA to develop a database to keep track of everyone they're helping...and it allows them to track by race!
  - ✓ "Educate" -
  - ✓ Summer Youth Employment - School Business Partnership got summer youth employment dollars for our town this year (around \$175k), and it was a huge success: 40 hours of career readiness training, and 11 interns were placed in actual employment!
  - ✓ There's a time gap so the town fronts the money for wages, then they repay the town when the grant comes through
  - ✓ Junior Achievement does an annual program, and Amy is offering stipends to encourage youngsters to stick through this process. Now there's a special EH cohort, and those kids will be mentored by professionals at Goodwin and Pratt
  - ✓ Collaborative grant seeking with the library for career readiness training
  - ✓ career readiness training in partnership with CT state library to benefit library users
  - ✓ Financial literacy series (4 workshops about everything from credit to home ownership) - in conjunction with Liberty Bank, who funded the stipends for participants
  - ✓ 3-part series hosted by **Sustainable CT** - focused on race, equity and inclusion. 5 residents did a capstone project: putting together a list of black-owned businesses in town! Partners:
- **Black Business Alliance** - there are apps that identify them!
  - ✓ Shop Black CT
  - ✓ Sarah at the library - working to make the document living, breathing and updatable
  - ✓ Professional Skills Academy - at Goodwin. 3 week career readiness boot camp. Family approach - food, childcare and transportation are all taken care of
  - ✓ Next one will be in spring 2021
  - ✓ Engage - connecting entire families with resources for healthcare, etc.
  - ✓ Employ
  - ✓ Working with Boston Fed to implement pilot dashboard program at Synergy HS; governor's workforce council is involved also
  - ✓ Pratt & Whitney pipeline - working with CCAT to hire local folks
  - ✓ Pratt mentoring program - on the way!
  - ✓ They help Spanish-only speakers also, they have a bilingual/bicultural staffer who's great

- ✓ Library - provides access to technology (b/c to do so many things you really need internet and a certain amount of tech literacy), and facilitates lots of programs:
- ✓ Connects people with SCORE
- ✓ Greater Hartford Legal Aid - holds regular office hours at the library
- ✓ 3-day series for teens of color, through a Ghanaian organization
- ✓ Entrepreneurship program for young people
- ✓ Expanding access to technology during pandemic (CARES Act money) - more robust wifi, lending out laptops

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### Q&A

**Don: Are we tracking PoC owned businesses in EH?**

- Jessica Carrero: it's hard to track. We need staff to do this, it's labor intensive and we're lean-staffed. We can do a query to find this stuff out, but it's a huge undertaking. Right now we're making sure we have the right software to even be able to do this
- Sarah: what we have now is a list...not searchable
- Amy: there are 110 businesses on it now. They have to call each one to get website, contact info, etc. Maybe in the future we can connect them so they can support each other
- Eileen: we have 3000+ total businesses in EH, according to the SoS list, but things change...and there are other lists. But a business doesn't have to register with the town in order to operate. We track people through physical stuff like land use and space that they (may) actually occupy
- Mayor: maybe the state has something! DAS and DECD might know something b/c they give certain benefits/preference to minority-owned businesses, especially in construction

**Don: What's the cost of the financial literacy series?**

- Amy: Liberty Bank gave us \$500, and everyone who participated got \$50...so it's very affordable.
- Sarah: it's easy to find high-quality, low-cost programs because banks and non-profits are all about this

**Don: Technology will be even more important after COVID. What's next?**

- Amy:
  - ✓ There's a national academy of finance at EHHS, and it's very sophisticated! Kids are really launching great careers from it
  - ✓ Maybe use the academy model for an expanded program
  - ✓ Maybe do Microsoft certifications (or at least Word and/or Excel) at the high school?
  - ✓ More dual certifications for high school kids to earn college credit

Don: Does the library collect data on who comes in to do a business-related interaction?

- Sarah: they track technology questions for folks at computers (and many/most have to do with at least job seeking, and also entrepreneurial stuff), reference questions, and they do a door count

Rich Kehoe: there's state and federal funding that we may be able to get our hands on, and he's willing to work his contacts. The incoming Biden administration should be a good partner in this.

#### ADJOURNMENT

MOTION By Angie Parkinson  
seconded by Pat Harmon  
to **adjourn** at 7:34 p.m.  
Motion carried 3/0.

C: Town Council  
Marcia Leclerc, Mayor  
Eileen Buckheit, Development Director  
Sarah Morgan, Library Director  
Amy Peltier, Director, East Hartford CONNects  
Jessica Carrero, Assistant to the Mayor