

**Regional and Economic Development Committee
Conference Call
Draft Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2022
3:00 PM**

Members Present via Microsoft Teams: Committee Chair Mike Walsh, Randal Davis and Bob Patricelli

Staff Present via Microsoft Teams: Mike Freimuth and Kim Hart

Guests Present via Microsoft Teams: Thomas Jansen, HR&A Advisors

The meeting was called to order at 3:04 p.m. by Chairman Walsh and the minutes of the January 13, 2022 meeting were approved on a voice vote.

1) **Regional Agricultural Market**

Mr. Jansen walked Committee members through the consultant's report on the Regional Market, highlighting agricultural and food system issues currently facing the State. These include supply chain issues that have been exacerbated by climate change and the COVID pandemic, as well as the insecurity associated with most of the State's food supply originating west of the Hudson River. An aging farmer population, a lack of diversity and inadequate training and support systems for new farmers also present challenges.

HR&A believes that redevelopment of the Regional Market could help address many of these issues. Mr. Jansen indicated that their plan provides for new warehouse and distribution space to enhance the Market's current role. The plan would also expand that role by including space for production and processing to extend the growing season for farmers. A redeveloped Market would give farmers greater access to sellers, including restaurants, schools and other institutions, while providing space for training and educational programs.

Mr. Freimuth noted that the goals set forth in the report align closely with those expressed by the State Department of Agriculture and that CRDA would work in conjunction with that agency on implementation of the Market plan. It was noted that HR&A met with the Ag Commissioner and current Market tenants, as well as with a variety of agriculture and food-related organizations as part of their research.

Mr. Patricelli queried whether HR&A reached out to groups such as the Farm Bureau during their work. Mr. Jansen noted that they had met some individuals, but that meetings with different stakeholders would continue through the development process.

Mr. Jansen suggested some next steps related to implementation of the plan, including the selection of development/management entity who could advise CRDA during the design and construction process. Funding will obviously be a critical issue and Mr. Jansen noted that a variety of sources could be explored. Mr. Davis expressed support for the plan and suggested that securing letters of interest from entities would help provide justification for moving forward with the planning process. Mr. Freimuth suggested that CRDA might want to initiate site prep work, including demolition of Building C, and that any new investment in the property would be done in segments.

Mr. Patricelli inquired about how the protein processing/slaughterhouse component included in the plan would work on the site. Mr. Jansen noted that care would be taken to keep it separate from the more public areas and that it would be fairly small.

Mr. Freimuth noted that HR&A will offer a presentation of the Market plan to the full Board at the March 24th meeting.

2) **Project Updates**

Mayor Walsh and Mr. Freimuth walked Committee members through the project spreadsheets, with the following highlights:

- a) Former Showcase Cinemas Site – The East Hartford Town Council unanimously approved a tax incentive deal for Jasko Development for construction of a 360-unit housing development on the site.
- b) Hilton Hotel – A double closing for both the hotel renovation and residential conversion will be scheduled shortly. Construction is scheduled to start in late Spring or early Summer.
- c) Silver Lane Sidewalk Project – CRDA will be forced to rebid the project as the selected contractor was unable to hold their price beyond the required 90-day period. The project has stalled as it awaits OPM signature on easements.
- d) Bond Façade Project – Financing for the project is expected to close shortly.
- e) Silver Lane Plaza – The Town is currently negotiating for the purchase of the blighted property, while consultants are working on a marketing study.
- f) SiFi – The town-wide fiber project is expected to begin installation in April and should be completed in 2024.

The next meeting of the Regional & Economic Development Committee is scheduled for April 14, 2022.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:49 p.m.