

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Notes

June 22, 2022, 2PM – 3PM

VIA ZOOM

Eric welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2:03pm.

- **Marketing consultant services – consultant hired, kick off meeting held** – Eric reported that DKA was hired as the marketing consultant out of four different firms interviewed. DKA will do a logo/brand/marketing campaign for the 4-Town Regional Economic Vitality Plan. A kickoff meeting was held on June 7 to set the schedule. Each town will be bringing in 2-3 additional people to give an initial evaluation of the marketing effort. The pared down ideas will then be taken out to the public, maybe by survey monkey, and then all the feedback will be brought to the Steering Committee for the final decision. It will help to hopefully get a naming/branding campaign that everyone feels good about to motivate moving forward.
- **4 Town – Tolland County Chamber of Commerce partner - Facebook business workshop, next workshop?** – Tim Liptrap explained that 15 businesses just concluded a workshop and there will be another series of workshops in July that will be for specific training on WordPress for about 12 businesses as requested. It was a good size group for teaching and seemed well received. It will be interesting to see if any new clients materialize from what was learned and put into motion. This embodies connecting with a local partner – Chamber – and connect to local businesses in accordance with the 4-Town Plan initiatives.
- **UCONN Masters of Public Administration intern – assistance with 4 Town initiatives – student hired** – After no success out of the first round of intern candidates, another 4 candidates were interviewed and Joshua Hull was selected. Joshua has an impressive resume and a lot of tools in his toolbox that should benefit him as he works with on the 4-Town Plan. At the July meeting the Steering Committee will look at what projects in the Plan might be good for Joshua to work on.
- Eric was wondering if there had been any follow up after the two forums with the University of CT staff on utilizing students in local business. Cara had not heard anything as of yet but will check back. Eric asked if Cara could find out what did they see that was helpful to their cause and how we can help them further.
- **Review of discussion last meeting with AdvanceCT** – Eric reviewed the highpoints from the Committees meeting last month with Courtney Hendricson. Courtney suggested connecting with the Eastern CT Workforce and Investment Board and discuss expanding our partnerships with them. Wendy Bury concurred and reported on a successful program they had done with Electric Boat. Another suggestion was a future partner meeting with the CT Office of Tourism – Rosemary Bove and Noelle Stevenson. Wendy is working on getting

someone to meet with the 4-Town Group and the new intern. We have been in contact with and should stay in contact with CT Small Business Development Center; Advance CT could assist with Land Use Zoning Permitting and process streamlining, but after discussion the four planners felt we were in pretty good shape in that regard already. Courtney provided a Co-working space inventory so that we could see what might be around and if it would benefit our area. Wendy Bury and Diane Nadeau reported about co-working spaces/shared working spaces. Mansfield is exploring a co-working space and trying to decide what way to go. Tip Liptrap reminded the group about the shared commercial kitchen space in Willimantic.

- **Expanding partnerships – collaborations – invitations for future discussions: State Office of Tourism, Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board** – see above.
- **4 Town Talk - Other Town news that relates to 4 Town mission** – Bolton is trying to pull something together for the fall at the Heritage Farm to showcase the venue. A previous reenactment event unfortunately fell through. The Town-Wide Tag Sale that just took place was also advertised with Tolland and Coventry. Tolland has gotten through the permit process for the massive Santini Development and hopefully it will be a great addition to the area. The EDC has been in touch with the UConn Incubator Program and is trying to make effective connections for vacant buildings. The Agriculture Commission is putting together a farm to table event for September. The first one was in 2019 and was intended to be an annual event but was paused due to COVID. Manchester Chamber is organizing a Food Truck and Brewfest in August. They are selling advertising and have event tables and it will be at the former Golfland in Vernon. Mansfield Town Council rolled out a local businesses assistance program for businesses that were affected by the pandemic. There will be an Ad Hoc group that reviews applications and recommendations will be made to the Town Manager. These will be modest grant awards with no match with a July 8 deadline to submit requests. Windham Chamber has been working with area Arts and Culture organizations to do some joint marketing and has created some community-wide events for all of them. In October there will be month-long promotion for all of the arts and culture councils for “spooky things”. This is a great way to help museums and arts communities. They are also working on workforce development for CNA’s. In the fall there will be an Economic Development Summit that had been taking place pre-covid and is now being revived. Coventry Farmers market is underway, the library is being renovated, Coventryfest and Fireworks is at the lake this weekend, Arts on Main will be back on September 17 for the 5th time. Wendy Bury thanked Eric for representing this group during a recent presentation about collaboration. Grants for public art programs have just been announced – Groton developing a public arts program; 3 cities did a grant program to help administer their money under AARPA. Wendy helps with arts and culture expertise. New London is now the 3rd Cultural District that was just announced yesterday and the state is trying to grow this list rapidly. Yesterday was also Make Music Day which Wendy is hoping to get into the Northeast region. It is in 1000 cities across the world.

Next meeting date, time, agenda items – Wednesday, July 20 at 2:00pm, and in August we will welcome Joshua Hull our new intern. Adjourned at 3:05pm.