

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

MEETING NOTES

MAY 18, 2022, 2PM – 3PM

- Guest – Courtney Hendricson, AdvanceCT – discussion on statewide economic vitality issues, 4 Town initiatives

The group introduced themselves.

Courtney - Happy to see progress with implementation.

Can offer input later on different state initiatives.

- UCONN/4 Town project – local business connections – hiring, recruiting students – virtual workshop - April 26 – review of event, marketing of materials from workshops to businesses

Eric - Cara Workman has been a great connection with UConn. Pulled together two virtual educational sessions with UConn Career Services to make connections with local businesses and UConn student internships and UConn student or recent graduate jobs.

We have presentations that we can put on our websites and get the word out further with our businesses.

- Marketing consultant services – Interviews being conducted

Eric - Working on branding and logo initiative, and a marketing campaign. Put together an RFP. Did four interviews and will do one more tomorrow. Will help us have a visible moniker.

- 4 Town – Tolland County Chamber of Commerce partner - Facebook business workshop – April 19 kick off and ongoing classes

Held several partner meetings – CTSBDC, Tolland County COC (TCCC), Windham COC, Last Green Valley, CRCOG, etc.

Tim - Worked with TCCC on workshops to assist businesses with utilizing Facebook to promote their businesses. Had about 25 people in the initial workshop. 2nd one was held yesterday. Held at Tolland Fire Station. Legal, medical, other offices attending.

Eric noted that these workshops were done at the request of businesses.

- UCONN Masters of Public Administration intern – assistance with 4 Town initiatives – status

Patrice - Interviewed candidates. Top two took other internship positions while another candidate had transportation issues. Staff team will interview four other candidates.

Eric – Goal is for intern to help “quarterback” our efforts.

- FEMA – Recovery funds grants for consultant services – status meeting with CRCOG and FEMA staff

Eric - Had an update about a week ago from FEMA. They are still working on process on funding. We gave them an update on where we are and indicated that we are still interested in the funding for the “quarterback” temporary position.

Courtney - AdvanceCT has has a strong relationship with UConn Career Services also. They can help as needed. AdvanceCT has dedicated staff that work on workforce issues. They can conduct a course on workforce. Eric – Chambers could help promote.

Courtney - Any work with ECSU? Eric – UConn was a table setting. Model for what we can do with ECSU, MCC, others

Eric - We would like to bring in the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB). See below. Courtney can help us with any and all WIBs. She said the work EWIB has done has been stellar.

Courtney - The CT Communities Challenge Grants 2nd round will be coming up.

Ryan - Mansfield got funding for Eagleville Green affordable housing and transportation and safety improvements on South Eagleville Road.

Courtney – Will be good for marketing consultant to connect with Noelle Stevenson, Director of the CT Office of Tourism.

Courtney - Any work around farming?

Eric - Thinks we are doing work in individual towns more than as a four-town group. Farmers markets, anaerobic digester project for one farm are some of the projects going on in the four towns. Supporting local food production.

Cynthia - The Taste of Mansfield initiative will recognize its first Champions who promote and educate about local food.

Courtney - Good to also focus on what each individual town does on its own. Do not recreate workload. Doing a great job with this.

Great to have chambers of commerce involved. Keep working with WBDC, CTSBDC. They provide several workshops.

Courtney - AdvanceCT could help with land use/zoning process streamlining. They may be able to help with this at no charge. Could also help by providing a co-working space inventory – updated on a regular basis. Can also help with a commercial inventory – Site Finder.

- Expanding partnerships – collaborations – invitations for future discussions: UCONN Cooperative Extension Service, State of CT Department of Economic and Community Development, Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board?

Eric - Does Wendy have updates on how best to work on tourism?

Wendy - Can help us get someone from CT Office of Tourism at our meetings. We should focus on Eastern Regional Tourism District.

- 4 Town Talk - Other Town news that relates to 4 Town mission

Wendy - Heather Somers is new co-chair of legislative tourism caucus. Waiting on Democratic appointee. Largest funding for tourism in Connecticut's history in this year's budget.

Do we have members on the CT Tourism Coalition? She will note who are members in Eastern CT.

"Find your Vibe" is new State tourism campaign. Put events, etc. on CTVisit. Doing more digital work. Outreaching to NY, etc.

Doing free access to all museums this summer in CT. Funded by State.

Planning for 250th anniversary of US – 2026. Big deal. What can we do in our towns?

Ask our legislators to be members of the arts, culture and tourism caucus in the legislature.

Sending us info on the Heart and Soul Program. Eric noted that the staff team has met with the group but their funding is at the beginning of a community outreach process and we had already done that outreach.

Courtney - Will let us know if any more info on the CT Community Investment Fund program as she finds out more.

Patrice thanked Courtney for all her help!

- Review and consideration of next steps to be taken in 2022

Next meeting date, time, agenda items

Eric - Will see if we can talk to EWIB. He asked Courtney for any contact there and will circle back with Courtney on any help with small business webinars.

Will meet on June 22 at 2 pm for next meeting.