

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2014 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL – SESSIONS CONFERENCE ROOM**

PRESENT: Chairman David Childs, Bill Baxter (arrived at 7:20), Bill Bohan, David Krimmel, Donna LaPlante, Mark Russo Alternates John Burdick, Cindy Donaldson and Lynn Charest.

ABSENT: Jim Brett, Shelley Lloyd; Bob Switzgable.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Chairman David Childs called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. Ms. Donaldson was seated for Mr. Baxter, Mr. Burdick for Mr. Brett and Ms. Charest for Ms. Lloyd.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. February 10, 2014 regular meeting.

MOTION Mr. Krimmel, second Mr. Burdick, to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2014 regular meeting; unanimously approved.

B. March 10, 2014 regular meeting.

MOTION Ms. Donaldson, second Ms. Charest, to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2014 regular meeting; unanimously approved.

3. BORGHESI PROPOSAL.

Mr. Childs explained that Mr. Borghesi had purchased property on the Canton line and wished to change the zoning from Residential 1.5 to Industrial Park. There was some discussion about the potential uses for the property ranging from the Canton Town garage to a possible new bus garage for Dattco and issues with residential development on the site due to distance from the sewer line.. Mr. Krimmel described Mr. Borghesi's presentation to the Planning & Zoning Commission and his informal query as to submission of a zone change. Mr. Krimmel expressed his opinion that this would be a positive change for the Town.

Mr. Russo inquired as to how far this parcel is located from the sewer line. Mr. Krimmel advised that it is 2 -3 miles from the sewer line and that Planning & Zoning has identified several parcels along Route 44 that could potentially be changed to mixed use. Ms. LaPlante asked Ms. Charest if Mr. Borghesi has applied for zoning changes in Canton. Ms. Charest stated that he had not. Mr. Krimmel indicated that the Planning and Zoning hearing for this property is scheduled for April 26, 2014.

Mr. Burdick indicated that he believes the potential use of a previously unusable parcel would be a benefit to the Town. Mr. Krimmel mentioned possible impact to the Rails to Trails project due to where the former railroad line crossed the property. Mr. Bohan

clarified that there is a portion of the railroad bed that has been destroyed resulting in a cliff so that section might not be viable for the trail. Ms. LaPlante indicated that based on discussions during Borghesi's search of the property, she believes that he would be amenable to allowing some portion of the property for open space which could be utilized for the trail.

MOTION Mr. Krimmel, second Mr. Burdick, to send a letter to Planning & Zoning in support of the Borghesi proposal; unanimously approved.

4. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES.

A. Support Existing Businesses - Mr. Krimmel.

Mr. Krimmel reported on the subcommittee actions to support existing businesses in town. Mr. Krimmel obtained a list of the town businesses that pay property taxes from the Assessor and is working to categorize those businesses in order to intermarket them with each other and market outside the town. There are about 15 manufacturing businesses in town employing about 500 people, 4 are in the Industrial Park, 3 on Greenwoods Road and several on Main Street. There are not many retail establishments in Town and some have already been entered on our website. At a future meeting, this Commission should discuss and evaluate how many of the manufacturing businesses should be listed on the town website under the Business page to provide an avenue for potential future businesses to evaluate what business environment exists in New Hartford. Initial focus will be on the Business page of the website.

Ms. Donaldson expressed that she has been involved with the Connecticut Main Street in Torrington and has had experience with other towns using social media to expand the business climate. She is willing to volunteer her time to push information on social media to draw visitors back to the website, but needs to be sure that the website is being updated with upcoming events. Ms. Donaldson indicated that she can assist with ensuring that the website is tied properly to google in order to capitalize on the typical practice to use google to search a town that individuals plan to visit.

Mr. Krimmel expressed that the EDC needs to be proactive in gaining community support for promoting the town. This can be done through other Boards and Commissions and through the Town libraries. He offered to carry this information back to the various town Boards and Commissions.

Mr. Russo asked about the existing community businesses promoting the town website on their sites and Ms. Donaldson agreed that sites like Ski Sundown should include links to the Town website.

B. Expand the Local Economy –Mr. Bohan.

Mr. Bohan summarized the draft project plan presentation prepared by the group in support of the Rails to Trails project and key funding sources that they identified. The group prepared a cost estimate of \$1 million per mile and expect that the cost of the trail may be as high as \$10 million. 80% of the funding is expected to come from federal sources, however federal funding cannot be pursued until the landowners' agreements are in place. Mr. Burdick inquired as to which direction the trail is expected to follow the railbed. Mr. Bohan described that the trail will cross Route 44 to flow through the River Run Condominiums. Mr. Krimmel suggested that instead of crossing Route 44 the group should pursue running the trail behind Marandino's and along those properties instead of staying on the railbed. Canton's plan is to potentially run the trail along the west side of the river, but has encountered issues with the property owners. Mr. Baxter suggested looking at several options of where to run the trail. Mr. Krimmel pointed out that the railbed at the intersection of Route 44 and Route 219 is 20 feet above the roadway. A discussion continued describing a similar point in the existing Canton trail. Mr. Burdick pointed out that traveling in the other direction toward Barkhamsted there are only 3 property owners which should make that portion easier to complete. Mr. Bohan indicated that the entire plan needs to be the focus in order to get the proper funding support. Designing the trail to loop back through Town would draw more users into town and thus draw more support for local businesses. Ms. Donaldson asked how quickly this project could happen if everything aligns properly. Mr. Bohan indicated possibly 2 – 3 years if the funding falls into place, but Ms. Donaldson and Mr. Burdick commented that it could be 5 to 10 years.

C. Enhance New Hartford's Character and Quality of Life – Mr. Childs.

Mr. Childs expressed the results of their meeting. The 4 topics that were identified for their group include expanding the residential mix, establishing the history trail as discussed with Tom Goddu, creating and sponsoring events to expand a sense of community and promoting events that make New Hartford special. The sub-committee is confident that they can accomplish those objectives. Thoughts were discussed about placing ads in the Independent requesting input of upcoming town events. Ms. Donaldson asked if their discussions included the Farmers' Market. Ms. LaPlante indicated that everyone misses the Farmers' Market now that there isn't one. Mr. Childs indicated that when he checked with Christine, she indicated that she had not received any complaints about the lack of a Farmers' Market. Mr. Childs arranged with John McCormick to use the Waring property for the Farmers' Market, but Anita Barden indicated that it is too late to book vendors for this year. Mr. Burdick indicated that he believes that more vendors would be interested if we can grow the attendance. Mr. Russo questioned when the market would be held and a discussion ensued about potential days and times. Ms. LaPlante mentioned holding a couple of Farmers' Market teasers during this season possibly tied in with Flea Markets at the Waring Building. Mr. Krimmel questioned if scheduled events for the upcoming season could be piggy-backed to draw more attendance.

Mr. Krimmel suggested that if the Board's consensus is to expand housing in New Hartford that a letter should be sent to the Planning & Zoning Commission indicating the Economic Development Commission's support. Mr. Baxter suggested that not adding to the school population should no longer be a concern because our school population is decreasing. While adding housing for the senior population is a viable concern, we should also be attracting young families and young professionals for the future of the Town. Mr. Russo asked which properties the Planning & Zoning Commission is considering for mixed use that might include high density housing that could be located on the water and sewer lines. Mr. Krimmel indicated that while Planning & Zoning has held informal discussions, there have not been any formal proposals from developers related to the parcels near Marandino's on Route 44. Mr. Burdick questioned the possibility of the Hurley property being a location for a mixed use development. Mr. Krimmel indicated that the Town needs to relocate the Town Garage in order to make that site appealing for any kind of housing development. Mr. Burdick suggested that a joint meeting between the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Economic Development Commission be scheduled in the next six weeks. Mr. Baxter offered to draft a letter suggesting this.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS PROPER TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

A. Property Tax Reward Program.

Mr. Bohan shared that after a conversation with the vendor, it was determined that in order for this to be viable for New Hartford we would need to regionalize with another town. He explained that New Hartford has about 2200 households, but we would need 5,000 housing units to make this a viable program. The program offers a card to every household which encourages them to shop local in order to gain a discount on their taxes. The property tax discount would be paid by the local merchants through a computer terminal in their shop. Mr. Burdick indicated that creating a partnership with Canton to participate in this program could be a viable means to draw Canton residents to shop in New Hartford. This will be approached through the Business Council due to the existing relationship with the Canton Chamber of Commerce to see if Canton would be willing to participate jointly with New Hartford in this program.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Ms. Donaldson, second Mr. Burdick, to adjourn at 8:17 PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Clerk**