

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 13, 2015 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL – 530 MAIN STREET**

PRESENT: Chairman David Childs, Jim Brett, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd, Mark Russo; Alternate(s) John Burdick and Cindy Donaldson; First Selectman Dan Jerram.

ABSENT: Bill Baxter, Bill Bohan, David Krimmel, Bob Switzgable.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Denton Butler, Troy LaMere, Paul Pobuda, Polly Pobuda, Joe Toro.

Chairman David Childs called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. The proceedings were recorded digitally and copies are available in the Town Clerk's Office.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

A. Seating of Alternates.

Mr. Childs seated John Burdick for Bill Baxter and Cindy Donaldson for Bill Bohan.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 8, 2015 Regular Meeting

MOTION: Ms. Shelley Lloyd, Mr. Burdick second, **to approve the June 8, 2015 minutes; Motion passed with Mr. Burdick, Ms. Lloyd, Mr. Jim Brett, Mr. Mark Russo, and Ms. Donaldson voting aye, Mr. Childs abstained.**

3. EDC Coordination with NHBC welcoming new businesses and upcoming events:

Mr. Childs reported his visit of the new dance studio, Dream Believe Achieve Dance Studio located at 283 Main Street, in New Hartford. Mr. Burdick commented that he had attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for this new business. Mr. Burdick reported that there was a good representation at the ceremony including First Selectman Dan Jerram, Phil Worley from the Canton Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from the New Hartford Business Council. Ms. Donna LaPlante noted how wonderful it was to see so many children in attendance, too.

Mr. Childs reported that the commission is attempting to meet with New Hartford's Business Council for joint meetings and to welcome new members. Mr. Burdick confirmed that NH Business Council President Paul Amenta is very interested in doing so. Ms. Lloyd opined that September would be a good time to invite the New Hartford Business Council to an EDC meeting because summer is not the most ideal time in terms of getting the most people in attendance. In response to a question from Mr. Brett regarding the dates of the council's meetings, Mr. Childs indicated that they take place on either the first or second Tuesday mornings. Ms. LaPlante noted that they take place at 8:00AM at Town Hall.

Ms. LaPlante reported that Ovation Guitar is returning to the Hurley Building, with the intention of expanding their operation. Commissioners agreed that this was good news.

Mr. Childs acknowledged and thanked Mr. Brett for chairing a meeting in his absence. He reported receiving an email from Mr. Bill Bohan this date, sharing his intention to resign from the commission. Mr. Childs noted to Ms. Donaldson that as she is next in line to change her alternate status to regular member status, process dictates that she should render her resignation to him as an alternate. He explained that she would then be appointed as a regular member at the next meeting of the Board of Selectmen, filling the vacancy created by the resignation. Ms. LaPlante reminded commissioners that a resignation is not deemed official until it is received by the office of the Town Clerk, noting she does not yet have one from neither Mr. Bohan nor the one that she has been expecting from Mr. Bob Switzgable. Mr. Childs noted that both members are aware of this.

4. Follow Up and Next Steps – EDC/CMSC Vibrant Town Center Program:

Mr. Burdick reported that an email has been sent to all attendees of the June 18, 2015 **Community Presentation: What Makes a Vibrant Town Center** and that this list will hopefully be valuable in finding ten (10) individuals to form a volunteer group. Ms. Donaldson inquired what the purpose of the group will be. Mr. Burdick shared a list of attendees as well as the Minutes from the meeting with commissioners. He directed their attention to a worksheet as provided by the facilitator of the program, Ms. Kim Parsons-Whitaker, a quadrant detailing organization, design, promotion and economic viability. A second sheet containing the organizations associated with these four concepts was detailed and referenced. Ms. Lloyd acknowledged that she has agreed to take the second sheet and add groups that may have been overlooked, such as the Art League and Garden Clubs under the Design quadrant.

Mr. Burdick opined that a committee should be formed outside of the EDC, with a dozen members at most. He noted that Ms. Parsons-Whitaker had forwarded a correspondence with suggested next steps. He opined that there should be some funding for this group, too. Ms. Donaldson shared that Torrington had a group, the Torrington Development Corporation, and was provided with a \$50,000 allocation from the city along with partnering in seeking grant funds. Mr. Burdick referenced Rails for Trails, commenting that this group has a private entity that can seek grants that a public entity could not receive and noted the advantages of have the group separated from the town officially. Ms. Donaldson detailed how Torrington has appointed members in terms of fair representation. The models of Waterbury and Simsbury were also mentioned by Mr. Burdick and Ms. Donaldson. Ms. Lloyd noted that towns more similar to New Hartford in terms of size and demographics should be consulted as far as handling a “Main Street” project.

Mr. Joe Toro of 565 Main Street inquired about the feedback response cards distributed at the conclusion of the presentation and whether any have been returned by attendees and received by Town Hall. Mr. Childs noted that as of a couple weeks ago, two (2) had been returned and are likely with Administrative Assistant to the First Selectman Christine Hayward.

Mr. Brett noted that given the time constraints of commissioners, he is somewhat cautious to create a new committee. Mr. Brett also noted that if an additional committee is indeed formed, it should include a cross section of people, i.e. one from Planning and Zoning, one from Economic Development and a few concerned citizens from the list of attendees at the presentation, as well as business owners. He also expressed concern regarding the creation of another document, opining that much of what is listed on Exhibit A of the June 18, 2015 Minutes of the EDC is already part of the 2015 Draft New Hartford Center Plan and/or Plan of Conservation and Development. He opined that the meeting seemed like an affirmation that the town is headed in the right direction. Ms. Lloyd agreed, noting that it seemed that the group received affirmation for having various things but that the take away was that a systematic organization is what is needed. Ms. Donaldson noted that while the EDC is geared towards the entire town, a subcommittee would be geared just towards a defined Main Street area. Ms. LaPlante noted that in her review of the list of attendees, she noticed business owners that are not typical participants of the New Hartford Business Council functions as well as residents who are not typically involved. She opined that the input from these types of individuals would be very valuable. Mr. Jerram commented that while the town has the branding, Ms. Parsons-Whitaker noted what is now needed is the strategy. He noted that Ms. Parsons-Whitaker loved the branding and the cohesiveness with the signage, the letterhead, and all that is done now but suggested that the question is what is the finite details that ultimately lead businesses to dovetail onto the fishing, skiing, hiking or snow shoeing.

Mr. Burdick requested commissioners return to him with suggestions from either the list of attendees or names of individuals likely to be interested in serving on the committee.

5. Downtown Center Pavilion Discussion:

Mr. Burdick reported that Mr. Bill Baxter had requested that his comments contained in an email to Mr. Childs be shared at the meeting. Mr. Burdick distributed copies of the email, (a copy of which is attached hereto marked Exhibit A and is available for review in Town Hall in accordance with the State of Connecticut schedule for records retention).

Mr. Baxter expressed in his email that, "...the 'pavilion' is not a priority spending item, and my own observation it is not placed correctly if it were a priority. It is simply not the 'magnet' in a renewal strategy. I would suggest strongly that the appropriation approved as part of '15/16 budget would be better allocated as seed money to review, initiate and invest to move the town garage as an important and critical element of downtown revitalization...."

Ms. Donaldson opined that the pavilion should be part of the Downtown Committee's discussion. Ms. Lloyd commented that she thought the project was already underway. Mr. Jerram noted that it is going through the regulatory process but is funded, drawn, designed and engineered. Ms. Donaldson said she did not realize this. Mr. Jerram said that as part of the continued efforts to support the existing businesses is to draw more foot traffic. He noted that what has been discussed for two years is that the businesses that bring people have been faced with a problem that there is no reason to pause or linger. He noted that with the consensus traditionally being that the river is such a huge asset, part of the thinking is to open up the river with canoe and/or kayak access as well as an entertainment venue that complements the Light New Hartford efforts, the summer efforts and possibly bringing back a limited, manageable farmer's market. A concert series in the fall between the summer concert series at Brodie Park and the winter concert series at the Beekley Library is a possibility for this location, according to Mr. Jerram. Ms. Donaldson noted that she doesn't think the pavilion is a bad idea. Mr. Russo inquired as to the cost. Mr. Jerram responded that while it has not been bid out yet, there is a budget for \$100,000. Mr. Russo noted that as a contractor he just a bid a gazebo project in Armonk, New York which came in at \$251,000. Mr. Brett asked if the pavilion was in the Town Plan. Mr. Jerram confirmed it was, noting that the old town Downtown Plan from 1995 included the pavilion. Mr. Brett inquired whether there had ever been a discussion about which of all those items detailed in the Downtown Plan would bring the most economic impact. In quantifying projects and considering the change in enrollments occurring at Northwest Regional District #7, Mr. Jerram explained that it was the least expensive project and really, all that the town could afford in "Year One". He noted that the foot bridge for this year, at \$400-\$500K, was not going to happen and the relocation of the town garage is linked with bonding changes at it is a seven figure project.

Mr. Denton Butler of 465 Town Hill Road noted that after initially learning about the idea of the pavilion, he liked it but has concerns over the location of the audience below the platform of the performers. Mr. Jerram noted that at venues such as Tanglewood or the Meadows, the audience often cannot see the band but still go for the music or the social aspect, to be part of something. He noted that what Mr. Butler describes has to be weighed against regulatory approval to build something right down at the river and whether or not it would have the benefit or impact of people being able to see it or hear it as they drive through.

Mr. Troy LaMere of 20 Shady Brook Road Extension noted that he had an opportunity to look at the plans and was somewhat disappointed in that they lacked "flare". He commented that he believes it is possible to get the actual cost of the construction of the building donated, with the only cost being that of materials. Ms. Lloyd noted that the EDC is not funding the project and has only endorsed the concept.

6. UPDATES:

A. Rails to Trails

Mr. Brett shared the progress of the Rails to Trails, noting that he is now armed with the names of the eight (8) owners of properties along the trail. He noted that he has received information on a communication strategy in this regard. He is attempting to meet with Neil Pade of Canton. Ms. Donaldson noted how the bike trail has positively affected property values to those close to it in Canton and that it would be a worthy endeavor to

consult with them on how they initially broached the subject and handled the communications. Mr. Brett noted that a feasibility study is a necessary next step in the process. The point person for the state property was discussed. Mr. Brett noted that he needs the contact information for Mr. Jeremy Schaller. Mr. LaMere provided information in this regard. Ms. Donaldson noted that the Rails to Trails website has quite a bit of information pertaining to best practice.

B. Street Paintings

Ms. Lloyd reported a request by Ms. Karen Meares of the New Hartford Art League to pass along the group's thanks for the additional allocation towards their **Paint the Pavement** project. Ms. Lloyd noted that the first allocation made by the EDC was used towards the initial mailing and that the second allocation will be used in part for the prizes awarded to the winners of the competition as well as some of the operational costs for the day of the event. Ms. Lloyd acknowledged Mr. Jerram for sending a town employee along with a member of the committee to Home Depot to purchase all the paint and supplies for the event. Ms. Peg Budny of Peggy's Personalized Promos will be the t-shirt provider, which will feature the same multicolored logo as contained on the initial mailing. It was noted that the location of the event has been shifted more towards the office of Attorney Norman Rogers and that the start time has been moved to an earlier slot.

C. Plan of Conservation & Development

Mr. Jerram reminded commissioners that the public hearing for the Plan of Conservation and Development is taking place on Wednesday, July 22, 2015 at 7:00PM.

7. ANY BUSINESS PROPER TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

Ms. Lloyd provided the commission with a breakdown of the \$400 allocation for the QR coding project service provided by Mr. Tom Goddu (a copy of which is attached hereto marked Exhibit B and is available for review in Town Hall in accordance with the State of Connecticut schedule for records retention). She noted that Mr. Goddu has indicated that the entire project is more likely to cost four (4x) times as much as originally projected. She noted that Mr. Goddu is not seeking any additional allocation from the commission at this time.

Mr. LaMere reported to the commission that Mr. Peter Marandino requested that he appear before the group to seek input and/or suggestions from the Economic Development Commission on filling the vacancies that are within the Marandino's shopping plaza. Ms. Donaldson noted that if Mr. Marandino or Mr. LaMere were to forward the details to her, she can put it out on the EDC's social media.

Mr. Toro inquired about the status of the Griffin property. Mr. Jerram noted that there is a potential buyer purchasing the property at a sum of \$35,000 higher than the town's offer. Conditions of the sale are being finalized, according to Mr. Jerram.

Ms. Polly Pobuda of 22 Church Street inquired whether sidewalks will be part of the downtown efforts and whether new construction in the downtown area is being required to include sidewalks. Mr. Jerram explained the funding being sought presently for repairs to crosswalk across 202 to Steele Road.

8. BUDGET BALANCE - \$10,000:

Ms. Lloyd explained that commissioners had requested that every meeting include the amount of funds remaining unspent. She noted that there are certain line items that are already presumed to have certain allocations and should be deducted as they are very likely to go unchanged.

9. "PARKING LOT" ITEMS:

Mr. Brett suggested that the agenda for the next EDC meeting should include an item designated for discussion of the budget.

MOTION: Ms. Donaldson, Ms. Lloyd second, **to adjourn at 8:11PM; unanimously approved.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Pamela Colombie
(Substituting for Recording Secretary Debbie Ventre)**