

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2015 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Chairman David Childs, Bill Baxter (7:02), Cindy Donaldson, David Krimmel, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd; Mark Russo, Alternate John Burdick.

ABSENT: Jim Brett, Bob Switzgable.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Bud Butler, Joe Toro (7:02), Troy LaMere (7:07)

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Chairman David Childs called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Mr. Burdick was seated for Jim Brett.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
July 13, 2015 regular meeting.**

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Burdick, to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2015 regular meeting; unanimously approved. Mr. Baxter, Ms. Donaldson and Mr. Krimmel abstained.

August 10, 2015 Workshop

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mrs. LaPlante, to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2015 workshop; unanimously approved. Mr. Baxter, Ms. Donaldson, Mr. Burdick and Mr. Krimmel abstained.

3. Presentation by Denton Butler

Chairman Childs welcomed Mr. Butler to address the group. Mr. Butler shared his thoughts on economic development in town and the Vision for New Hartford that he had written some years ago. "Allowable uses in zoning may not accomplish our goals." If we don't take control of our destiny of what we want New Hartford to be instead of what our allowable uses will permit we could end up with a very different image than what we desire.

Ms. Lloyd commented that the town cannot micro-manage the zoning regulations. Mr. Butler replied that there are ways to determine what is acceptable to the town.

Mr. Butler passed out a sample downtown questionnaire which could be used to have potential visitors/shoppers/customers define what would bring them to the New Hartford downtown district that would help to identify consumer choices. He suggested Middletown as a successful eatery destination such that if the line is too long for one type of cuisine there are ample options for alternative choices.

Ms. Donaldson commented that she agrees with the concept of the survey, but the property owners need to buy in to the downtown vision. The town needs to come together and the business owners need to buy in for this to work.

Mr. Butler cited additional examples of other towns that have successfully done this.

Ms. Donaldson commented that all vibrant downtowns have nearly all the items listed on the back of the survey. But successful vibrant downtowns typically have a paid marketing person on staff and New Hartford does not.

Ms. Lloyd stated that there have been previous discussions about bringing in certain types of businesses. For example, a grocery store will not come in without population density to support it. Which raises the question of whether we're putting the cart before the horse. For other towns, there were other things that were bringing people to town and then it developed from there.

Mr. Butler pointed out that there is currently nothing bringing people into New Hartford. He recommends developing guidelines and bringing them to the Board of Selectmen to formulate a plan.

Mr. Krimmel commented that he believes the survey is an excellent idea. The growth of this town depends upon its economy and the economy depends upon not only the people who visit here but also those who live here. He would like to see it as a sampling document not just for the EDC, but also for Planning & Zoning and the other Commissions.

Mr. Butler indicated that he disagrees with the comments that the town needs to hire a marketing person. He would rather see the town contact a local college or university and have them complete the study as a research project.

Mr. Butler shared that in the existence of the WPCA it has not shown a profit with the exception of two years where they counted the grants that were received. They shared the study that they completed this year with the DEP and were told that it was better than some of the professional work they had received. He would recommend that the EDC not discount a volunteer effort.

Mr. Toro commented that New Hartford has the Farmington River, Ski Sundown and West Hill Lake as town assets but no longer has a full-time Recreation Director to promote those assets. He stated that all the successful towns that Mr. Butler had cited did have a full-time marketing person that helped to develop their economy.

Ms. Donaldson agrees that the town needs to be operated as a business, but in order to do so it needs to share a common vision for the future. Mr. Toro added that you start by interviewing some consultants and get some feedback from them.

Ms. Lloyd agreed with Mr. Toro's comments about the town assets and the town branding. The "Town for All Seasons" motto is recreation focused but there is no longer a full-time Recreation Director.

Chairman Childs suggested that the topic of the questionnaire be revisited in October, but Ms. Lloyd and Ms. Donaldson commented that it could be addressed now.

Mr. Russo commented that there is another facet to the questionnaire. In addition to contacting visitors and residents, someone should also poll the business owners. Mr. Toro agreed that many of the business owners have suggestions and their input could be valuable.

MOTION Mrs. LaPlante, second Mr. Krimmel to take the questionnaire and review for the next month to return prepared to implement the process. Unanimously approved.

Mr. LaMere then addressed the Commission on behalf of Peter Marandino regarding the three open spaces he is trying to fill in his building. Mr. Marandino is willing to help potential tenants with reduced rent during construction. Ms. Lloyd commented that she doesn't agree with the sign indicating that the space is perfect for a pizza restaurant.

Mr. LaMere would like suggestions from the EDC on what they would like to see in Marandino's Plaza.

4. UPDATE OF RAILS TO TRAILS

Chairman Childs shared an email from Jim Brett who was unable to attend tonight's meeting: In the interest of saving time, the email was passed around and members are asked to review it. Ms. Donaldson suggested that additional volunteers for the Rails to Trails Committee would really help Jim out as he has been traveling a great deal for work.

5. UPDATE OF EDC/CMSC VIBRANT TOWN CENTER PROGRAM

Mr. Burdick stated that he has received a couple of suggestions for members of the Downtown Center Committee. He believes the assistance of Connecticut Main Street could make the difference in getting things moving, but clearly we need to know what we want. Ms. Donaldson added that a plan needs to be developed with action items and target dates so that the plan moves beyond just talking.

Chairman Childs suggested that Mr. Burdick establish the committee. All members are asked to provide suggestions for members to Mr. Burdick by the next meeting. Mr. Childs suggested Paul Amenta. Mr. Burdick said he received that name and another name. Mr. Toro volunteered to help. Mr. Krimmel stated that Mr. Burdick is Chairman of the Downtown Committee and asked who he would like to see on his Committee. There have been wonderful suggestions but as has always happened there are many opinions but no volunteers.

6. PAINT THE PAVEMENT EVENT – SEPTEMBER 19, 2015

Ms. Lloyd provided an update on the Paint the Pavement this coming Saturday and shared the winning designs and locations where they will be painted. She commended Mrs. Ventre on the support that she gave the Art League in promoting the event, by writing the press release, setting up the online voting and creating posters.

7. BUDGET BALANCE

Chairman Childs distributed a summary of the current budget year.

MOTION Ms. Donaldson, second Mr. Burdick to set a budget for the year of all the items that will need to be paid at the next meeting. Unanimously approved.

Mr. Russo suggested that as an incentive for filling out the questionnaire a coupon be offered as \$5 off lift tickets at Ski Sundown, perhaps half of that paid by EDC and half by Ski Sundown.

Ms. Lloyd stated that she does not believe that EDC funds should be spent without a vote by the Commission.

8. FOLLOW-UP ON PENDING ITEMS FROM AUGUST

Chairman Childs shared that he had followed up with Paul Amenta about a joint meeting with the Business Council, but EDC would need to have an 8:00 am Special Meeting to do so.

Chairman Childs congratulated Cindy Donaldson on becoming a full member and shared that there are now two openings for Alternate Members. He inquired if the Commission would support Polly Pobuda being appointed to one of the Alternate positions.

At Chairman Childs' request, Mrs. LaPlante shared information on the Architectural Review Committee's discussion about the proposed Downtown Pavilion.

Chairman Childs mentioned that we should be pressuring the LHCOG to have the 100 year flood plain lines updated as had been discussed at last month's workshop.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Mr. Toro inquired about the garbage cans around downtown as they seem to be dwindling. The painted cans used to look very nice, but there aren't as many as there used to be. He asked whether recycling bins should also be provided.

All Commission Members thanked Mr. Butler for his presentation and suggestions.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Mr. Russo, to adjourn at 8:15 PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Clerk**