

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 2016 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Chairman David Childs, Cindy Donaldson, David Krimmel, Donna LaPlante (7:02 pm), Shelley Lloyd, Mark Russo (7:03 pm), Alternate John Burdick.

ABSENT: Jim Brett.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Bill Baxter, Bob Moore, Maria Moore, Joe Toro, Selectman Laura Garay (7:05 pm), Mary Lou Rayno (7:05 pm)

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Chairman David Childs called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. John Burdick was seated for Jim Brett. As Mr. Baxter has not been reappointed by the Board of Selectmen he was present as a member of the public.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
December 14, 2015 regular meeting.**

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Krimmel, to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2015 regular meeting; unanimously approved. Ms. Donaldson abstained. Mrs. LaPlante & Mr. Russo had not yet arrived.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS - CHAIRMAN & VICE CHAIRMAN

Ms. Lloyd commented that she would prefer to postpone the election of officers until the February meeting allowing everyone the opportunity to prepare for nominations. Perhaps by that time the Board of Selectman may have appointed individuals to fill the open seats. She requested that the next notice of meeting feature a prominent reminder for all members to prepare nominations.

Mr. Childs indicated that since he has congestive heart failure and other health issues he would like to withdraw from any consideration to continue as Chairman.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Member of the public, Maria Moore inquired when the agenda would permit public comment as they had dinner waiting at home. When asked to proceed, she commented that she would like to commend the Commission on the Downtown Center Initiative meeting that was organized by an Alternate Member of the Commission last year and the positive attitude it has generated among town businesses and residents.

5. BUDGET PROJECTIONS FOR 2016 – 2017

A. ADDITIONAL PAINT THE PAVEMENT PROJECTS

Chairman Childs indicated that he had spoken with Cheryl Barkley about potentially having another Paint the Pavement event this year. Christine told him that the Town paid \$5,000 for the paint.

Ms. Lloyd mentioned as a member of the Committee for the 2015 event, she did not believe that any of the committee members would be willing to do another event as they did not have as many volunteers as expected and did so much of the work themselves on the last event.

B. FISHING DERBY

Ms. Lloyd questioned the need for additional funds as she had understood that there were funds in an account to cover this event. Chairman Childs indicated that those funds would cover this year, but this agenda item is for next year's budget.

C. DOWNTOWN CENTER BANNERS

4. SIGNS FOR LOCATING BUSINESSES

Mr. Baxter shared that he visited Write Way signs and spoke with Jeremy about building a scaffolding 8 or 9 feet tall anchored in the ground with hooks on the scaffolding and grommets on the banners. With this design once the scaffolding is mounted the banners could be changed by one person within an hour. The banners could be theme oriented or directionally oriented. The banners could be professionally designed, a school contest or by local artists. The cost would be about \$100 per banner. Street sign add-ons could be designed to tie in with the banner designs. He circulated a concept sketch of the proposed design for the scaffolding.

Ms. Lloyd inquired about the cost per scaffolding. Mr. Baxter replied that the first one would be \$500 - \$600 as the design and fabrication was determined but the cost should be lower for additional scaffoldings. The Commission could pay for the first one and then local businesses could pay for additional ones. Ms. Donaldson inquired about how the Commission would determine which businesses they would pay for and who would be asked to contribute. The consensus among the group was that businesses should want to participate in order to generate interest and attract visitors.

Mr. Krimmel expressed thanks to Mr. Baxter for pursuing this project idea and would like to suggest that as the representative of the EDC he present this project to the Board of Selectmen and if received favorably then to the Board of Finance. The input of the Business Council should also be sought before deciding to move forward with this project. Ms. Lloyd inquired if the approval of Planning and Zoning would also be required. Mr. Krimmel indicated that it would not. Mr. Moore commented that as long as the project complies with the current Zoning regulations it would not require

approval. Mr. Baxter commented that conceptual approval from the other Boards, should be sufficient to move forward.

Mr. Baxter added that he would need assistance in tying the theme in with the concept of the signs. Mr. Krimmel indicated that the Commission will need to be prepared to explain the purpose of these signs and they should be generic advertisements of the town assets. He believes that these conversations with the other Boards and Commissions will identify which assets we want to promote.

Ms. Lloyd expressed that this Commission should take a position as something that we believe in rather than requesting permission to pursue the project. The design ties in with the gateway concepts that were in the Downtown Center Plan developed by the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Donaldson expressed that she believes we should move forward and perhaps copy the other Commissions on what the EDC is planning rather than spending another year obtaining their input.

6. DOWNTOWN CENTER COMMITTEE – EDC/CMSC

Chairman Childs asked Mr. Burdick to provide an update on the Downtown Center Committee. Mr. Burdick indicated that he has not moved forward due to concerns from potential committee members and his own concerns that he has not received a response from the First Selectmen to confirm his commitment to the initiative and Mr. Burdick's increased involvement in the EDC as a full member; therefore he is unsure about the level of support from that office. Mr. Burdick stated that he thought it prudent that he not take a leadership role in the Downtown Center Committee until such support is clear. He expressed his continued strong interest and willingness to support the Downtown Center Committee and the overall ongoing efforts of the EDC.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Mr. Baxter asked to address the Commission regarding the work done by Jim Brett and Bill Bohan on the Rails to Trails project. He commended the extensive work that they had completed. He indicated that he had reviewed the grant application for Mansfield who spent \$29,000 to have their grant drafted. He has also spoken with a business along Route 44 who indicated that he was initially opposed to the project, but now that he has built buildings along other trails he would fully support it. The State has indicated that there is not currently any funding available for Rails to Trails, but that an RFP will be going out this winter. Mr. Baxter believes that this Commission should allocate funds to hire a Grant Writer in order to get the grant application completed in a timely manner. Ms. Donaldson commented that we owe it to Mr. Brett and Mr. Bohan to pursue this project so that all their efforts will come to fruition.

Mr. Russo commented that if you could identify one thing that would impact the downtown area immediately, the Rails to Trails project is it. He also commented that the completed trail would totally change the face of events on the green in Pine

Meadow if the trail connected to Canton as that would draw visitors to New Hartford from the Canton/Collinsville area.

Mr. Toro commented that he believes the Commission should take charge of this project in order to move it forward. WPCA has confirmed that the Town owns the Jones Mountain trunk line which is a strong starting point for the town. Mr. Baxter added that these trails are made to accommodate handicapped but are not required to be fully handicapped accessible due to the constraints of the terrain. Mr. Toro suggested that the Commission ask the Board of Finance for the funds to complete the study.

MOTION Mrs. LaPlante, second Mr. Russo, to allocate up to \$2,500 to hire a Grant Writer to pursue grant funding for the Rails to Trails project; unanimously approved. Mr. Krimmel abstained.

5. BUDGET PROJECTIONS FOR 2016 – 2017

Ms. Lloyd questioned why the EDC is paying for the website support fees and why the fees are so high. Mrs. LaPlante commented that by paying the fees the Commission retains control of the site and has more input on what is featured and promoted.

Ms. Lloyd inquired what the \$190 listed in this year's printing costs. Chairman Childs indicated that he believes it may be expenses related to the First Selectmen chronology on the wall of the Conference Room. Ms. Lloyd questioned why Commission funds were used for that project when the Commission had not voted to spend those funds. Mr. Childs indicated that he had personally paid for most of that project. A discussion ensued about whether the Grant Writer is needed for this fiscal year or next year. Mr. Baxter clarified that the Grant Writer is needed this fiscal year. If the Fishing Derby does not need the full \$2000 allocated this year, those funds would be available. Mr. Toro inquired if the Fishing Derby will be organized so that participants will pay. It is possible that the fees would cover the costs, but that is currently unknown since there was no Fishing Derby held last year and the prior events did not charge a participation fee.

Mr. Krimmel proposed that \$4,000 be allocated in the next fiscal year for the signage project. A discussion continued about where the funds could be allocated in order to fund the signage this year. Ms. Donaldson clarified that this year the Commission could fund the Grant Writer or the signs, but if the funds are needed for the Fishing Derby it would not be possible to do both. Therefore the sign project may need to be pursued in the next fiscal year.

Mrs. LaPlante asked on behalf of the Commission for Mr. Baxter to pursue the grants needed to move forward with the Rails to Trails project.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Ms. Donaldson asked for the Social Media maintenance to be on the February agenda.

Mr. Toro commented that he would like to see the members of the Commission advocate for John Burdick to become a full member of this Commission. Mr. Russo suggested that a letter be drafted from the whole Commission to be signed by everyone advocating for John to become a full member.

MOTION Ms. Donaldson, second Ms. Lloyd, to send a letter to the Board of Selectmen signed by all Commission members endorsing for Mr. Burdick to become a full member of the EDC. Mr. Burdick abstained.

Mr. Baxter commented that he does not believe that taking this action would accomplish the objective instead it would increase the polarization of the issue. He suggests opening a conversation with the Board of Selectmen through the member who is present this evening. Ms. Donaldson withdrew her motion.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Ms. Donaldson, second Ms. Lloyd, to adjourn at 8:14 pm; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Secretary**