

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, JUNE 9, 2014 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL – SESSIONS CONFERENCE ROOM**

PRESENT: Chairman David Childs, Bill Bohan, Jim Brett, David Krimmel, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd; Alternate John Burdick (arrived at 7:12). First Selectman Dan Jerram

ABSENT: Bill Baxter, Mark Russo, Bob Switzgable Alternates Cindy Donaldson and Lynn Charest.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Steve Hanright, Troy Lamere, Lori Lamere, Joe Toro, Maria Moore and Bob Moore

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Chairman David Childs called the meeting to order at 7:01PM.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

April 14, 2014 regular meeting.

Mr. Bohan requested a correction to the minutes. He clarified that he had stated that the old trail bed passed through the River Run condominium, but in fact, the new trail would not be laid out to pass through the River Run Condominiums.

MOTION Mr. Krimmel, second Mrs. LaPlante, to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2014 regular meeting with the above noted change; unanimously approved.

3. PRESENTATION BY TROY LAMERE

Joe Toro introduced Focus New Hartford and explained that the group's mission is to improve communication among residents, foster community involvement and create a more vibrant community. They have been working to improve the corner at the center of town that was formerly a gas station. Troy Lamere shared a concept photograph and explained that he has spoken with Mr. Griffin about adding a white picket fence and planting grass on the parking lot to improve the image of the corner. He plans to approach Mr. Griffin again in the future to add an information booth. He is seeking the approval and assistance of the commission to start the project. Mr. Griffin may have a buyer which would be a positive outcome for the town, but if the purchase falls through Mr. Lamere would like to have a contingency plan in place. Time is of the essence to get the topsoil laid and grass planted in order to get the project moving forward for the summer growing season. Mr. Lamere and Mr. Toro have arranged for donations to cover the grass seed, fencing and installation. They are seeking funds to pay for 200 yards of topsoil which they expect to reimburse from community donations. They have even arranged for the fire department to water the property.

Ms. Lloyd asked about the cost. Mr. Lamere replied that he expects the cost to be in the range of \$4,000 to \$5,000. Mr. Childs stated that it is difficult to commit funds to improve private property unless the funds could be returned upon the sale of the property. Mr. Lamere did not believe it would appropriate to place that demand upon

Mr. Griffin. Mr. Toro commented that the focus of the EDC is to develop the economic environment of the town. He believes that \$5,000 is quite reasonable considering the value of the donations that have been committed by Home Depot, and the excavation contractor.

Mrs. LaPlante asked what would be done if they were given \$1,000, would they just seed the front of the property. Mr. Lamere and Mr. Toro replied that they hadn't thought of that. Ms. Lloyd agreed that she thought a fence with nice plantings in the front would be a nice start to improve the image.

Mr. Jerram commented that using town funds to improve private property would create an outcry. Mr. Toro questioned the difference between the town purchasing the property. Ms. Lloyd pointed out that the decision to purchase the property would have to go before the town for a vote.

Mr. Krimmel commented that he really appreciates the initiative of Focus New Hartford to try to improve the image of the town instead of just complaining about the trash on the roads. This type of initiative could accomplish a great deal in this town if a group of volunteers takes the opportunity to improve the town's image. He suggests that the commission look beyond what happens here. If a drought were forecast for the summer, the volunteer group would have the time to pursue a fundraising effort to raise the funds to improve the property. This project could set a significant precedent for the EDC to support this volunteer initiative.

Mr. Brett commented that supporting an initiative like this is different from funding an initiative like this. Although he salutes their initiative, he agrees with Mr. Jerram on the slippery slope in spending town funds to improve private property.

Mrs. LaPlante inquired if Mr. Lamere had a map of the property. Mr. Lamere replied that he has the state map and has their approval to place the fence outside the state right of way. Ms. Lloyd again commented that she believes the fence and the plantings in front would improve the image of the corner. Mr. Toro and Mr. Lamere commented that the \$1,000 mentioned earlier would cover about ¼ of the property for topsoil and seeding. Mr. Brett suggested that if the property does not sell by Thursday, that they proceed with the fence and plantings that have already been donated.

Mr. Krimmel suggested that the group work out a lease arrangement where they maintain the property. Mr. Lamere asked Mr. Childs how the prior request for that arrangement worked out previously. Mr. Childs indicated that Mr. Griffin had not been receptive to such an arrangement in the past.

Mr. Burdick commented that he believes they are to be commended for the work they have done so far, but agrees that spending town funds on private property is not appropriate. There are other properties that could use improvements, but the ramifications of starting that precedent could be difficult in the future.

Mr. Jerram pointed out that the issue with the property not selling is not whether it looks nice, but whether there is potential contamination.

Ms. Lloyd also applauded the group's efforts to improve the image of that corner. She suggests that installing the fence and plantings now would allow time to raise funds to plant grass in the fall. Mr. Lamere indicated that his plan is to completely block off access to the parking lot with the fencing. By design, the project should be done all together otherwise, the fence could be damaged when filling the topsoil later in the season. He is willing to wait another year, but if he could receive the funding he is ready to plant grass in 2 weeks.

Mrs. LaPlante asked where exactly the fence will be. Mr. Lamere replied that the fence line will be about 10 feet back from the edge of the road or 50 feet from the center of the road line with bark mulch and plantings in front of it. He wants the plantings in place to prevent parking along the edge of the road. He is trying to avoid vehicles being left on the property as currently occurs.

Mr. Burdick questioned if there would be any liability in moving the existing dirt around with the potential for contamination. Mr. Lamere responded that he would only be adding topsoil not moving the existing soil.

Mr. Lamere asked if the Commission would consider the funds as a loan if he could repay it from resident donations. Ms. Lloyd again commended their efforts but wished that they had started the process earlier in order to raise sufficient funds.

Mrs. LaPlante asked if there are any items being donated that could be traded for the topsoil as the commission could probably justify spending funds on the area that is the state right of way.

Mr. Jerram commented that if Mr. Griffin agrees to sign the lease, they would then need to go before Planning & Zoning, but that process would not be completed in 2 weeks.

Mr. Krimmel commented as a member of Planning & Zoning that they might also need to confirm that there is no issue with the location of the fencing to ensure they have appropriate setbacks. Mr. Lamere indicated that he has already spoken with Steve Sadlowski and he did not have any issue with the fencing.

Mrs. LaPlante suggested that the expense of the improvements made by this group should be deducted from the purchase price if the property is ever sold to the Town. Mr. Lamere indicated that he can approach Mr. Griffin with that suggestion.

Mr. Lamere indicated that he would next approach this commission with a proposal to complete the Rails to Trails project without government funds. Mr. Childs inquired if he could commit to a \$2,000 matching grant, how much in additional funds could they raise. Mr. Lamere replied that they had not yet had the opportunity to pursue that avenue, they had only been working on this for about a week.

It was suggested that they approach the businesses in the area who look at that location to see if they would be willing to donate toward the improvements. Mr. Childs stated he could get them \$2,000 from Friends of New Hartford, if they can raise the remainder from donations.

Mr. Burdick suggested an organization that could assist with advertising signage as a fundraising process.

4. REVIEW OF WEBSITE

Mr. Krimmel explained that this group funded the new town website as a means to make the town more attractive to visitors.

He then showed the group the layout of the Visitors page on the Town website. He believes that the information displayed there is a nice introduction to the town and the area businesses that might be of interest to visitors.

The businesses page should be geared toward investors who might be interested in bringing a business to New Hartford. He contacted the Assessor to identify the businesses located in New Hartford. We have approximately 500-600 businesses of varying types in town. He would like to see an additional category for manufacturing added to the website. There are 15 manufacturing businesses in town although some have only a few employees.

Ms. Lloyd commented that she would like to see them added as that shows what is here in town. There are 250 service businesses in town that are residence based. He would like to see a Home Improvement category under retail for Home Depot. Ms. Lloyd would like to see a Grocery category under Retail to support Marandino's. Mr. Krimmel would also like to see the dog kennel added.

Mr. Brett commented that the website will be enhanced with more categories to list more businesses. Mr. Krimmel highlighted the types of businesses that we have in town.

Ms. Moore questioned if any business in town could be asked to be added to the website. Mr. Krimmel indicated that he would prefer to be selective. Mr. Bohan questioned the parameters for determining who may be included. Mr. Krimmel replied that we want to attract people to live or shop here. Ms. Lloyd asked if the Assessor's list could be available by link. Mr. Brett commented that many of the links on the business page were visitor links. He thought the website would be more a clearing house of information for businesses. Ms. Lloyd clarified that information is available at a different location.

Mr. Jerram suggested a heading of Featured businesses with a comment that a link to all businesses is available where the leading businesses can be changed seasonally. Mr. Krimmel commented that the comment could also read that the full list is available by contacting the Assessor. Ms. Lloyd will speak with the Assessor to determine the

feasibility of having the link available. Mrs. LaPlante commented that D'Amore will have a real estate office in town now through the Main Stream Canoe location.

Mr. Bohan commented that in searching a website for an area he was planning to visit, the website had lots of pictures that drew them in. Mr. Krimmel illustrated how the links from our pages lead to the website of the businesses who have the pictures. Mr. Jerram commented that he'd like to see a slide show on each of the directory pages to draw visitors in and attract them to the town.

Mr. Krimmel feels more confident now that so much more information is available now than what was available two years ago. He would like to see more events on the calendar where events flow into each other during the various seasons. Ms. Lloyd complimented Mr. Krimmel on the efforts he has made in improving the information available on the website.

5. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES.

A. Support Existing Businesses - Mr. Krimmel.

Mr. Krimmel indicated that one of the items on their list was to create a branding for New Hartford and he's suggesting "A Town for All Seasons" and use that to attract not just for those who want to come for hiking and fishing, but also cycling races etc. He'd like to see "A Town for All Seasons" on the banners at New Hartford Day.

Ms. Lloyd noted that the banners currently hanging in town have the 4 seasons in the logo.

B. Expand the Local Economy –Mr. Bohan.

Mr. Bohan indicated that he contacted Rick Lynn who is the planning director for LHCEO. He works with the First Selectmen for transportation funding and Mr. Jerram and Mr. Stein would have to talk with him about the funding. They need letters of endorsement from elected officials like Senator Witkos. They have received contact information for the Department of Transportation to assist with funding and preliminary designs. They also need to review the map to identify the land owners on the route to be followed. Canton is on board and has trails laid out to meet on whichever side of the river our trail ends up coming out on.

Mrs. LaPlante questioned if there are cycling organizations who could offer suggestions on the routes they typically follow. Mr. Brett commented that the plan will be to use the existing bed as much as possible, tied in to the funds. Ms. Lloyd commented that we should be sure that the route is prepared properly with the right underlayment so that the pavement is durable and lasting.

Mr. Bohan stressed that the instructions they have been given are to speak with the property owners first because they need to be on board before funding can be pursued.

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

Mr. Childs indicated that \$400 was given to Blazing Pencils and Tom Goddu has started working on the QR code history trail.

Mr. Childs mentioned that the Mobil station has closed. Wednesday is the voting on the zone change for Satan's Kingdom LLC. There were 29 comments printed in the Independent and many of those related to information that was misunderstood. He would very much like to see Planning & Zoning approve the zone change because industrial zoning would allow the town more control than the current residential zoning. Mr. Jerram stressed that no one wants to see any damage to the river.

Mrs. LaPlante wondered if the rest of the EDC members would like to be informed when future proposals will be heard at public hearing so that more members can be present to speak in favor of such proposals as she and Mr. Childs did for this proposal.

Mr. Burdick questioned if the plan would allow additional setbacks from the river and less impact. Mr. Jerram confirmed that the plan is for a 100 foot setback from the river which would not be visible. He is talking about 3 smaller industrial buildings which are different from what we currently have available. Mr. Burdick clarified that New Hartford residents seem to be more concerned with the section of the project that will be located in Canton.

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

Maria Moore commented that the goals mentioned in Mr. Krimmel's presentation seem to be trying to accomplish too much in one page. Ms. Lloyd clarified that there are 3 different pages. Ms. Moore objected to the commission being selective on who is included in the website. She would object to her tax dollars being used to fund a site that excludes any town businesses. Bob Moore indicated that the featured business idea should also be handled very carefully.

Ms. Moore also wanted to make sure the commission was aware that the WPCA received a grant/loan commitment of 3.7 million dollars in the last month or so from the DEEP Clean Water earmarked for Economic Development to run sewer lines down Cottage Street with an extension to the Industrial Park and Greenwoods Road. Mr. Hurley came to the WPCA with a proposal for a 200 unit development in the open field and requested assistance in running sewers down there. There was discussion among the WPCA members to divert those grant funds toward the Pine Meadow area.

Steve Hanright of the WPCA has been tasked with public relations, and he came to the meeting tonight to identify how the commissions could work together to educate the public and promote the plant. Mr. Burdick commented that he is not sure how informed the EDC is on WPCA matters. Mr. Jerram commented that although he is not sure if both the Industrial Park and Greenwoods Road are included in the grant, it is truly the task of the WPCA to identify a direction for growth and take advantage of

the grant funding. After they identify the path they wish to follow they can seek the support of other commissions.

Ms. Moore commented that WPCA is talking about raising rates to cover current expenses and does not have the funding for a study. Mr. Brett suggested that time be allocated at the next meeting to better understand the situation. Ms. Lloyd would like to hear from WPCA without hiring a consultant on what their consensus is on how they would like to proceed. If she hears their plan, she'd be better able to respond to it.

Mr. Toro commented that he would like to see more commission members attend the meetings of other commissions to improve communication and information flow. Mr. Hanright's presence here is to fulfill that purpose.

Ms. Moore mentioned a concern that the funding would be lost while the WPCA tries to determine how to proceed. Mrs. LaPlante inquired if Mr. Hurley should be invited to the next meeting. Ms. Moore offered to forward the grant paperwork to members of the EDC.

Mr. Hanright asked how many members would like to tour the plant. He would be happy to arrange a tour and his contact information will be provided to commission members.

Mr. Jerram suggested that the EDC could use some of the remaining funds in their budget for this fiscal year to purchase the signage with the "A Town For All Seasons" slogan to replace the 275th anniversary signage.

MOTION Ms. LaPlante, second Ms. Lloyd to authorize the chairman to purchase four "A Town for All Seasons" signs.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Mr. Bohan, second Mr. Burdick, to adjourn at 9:10 PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Clerk**