

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

**PRESENT:** Jim Brett, Jack Casey, Cindy Donaldson, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd, Mark Russo; Alternates Bill Baxter, John Burdick, First Selectman Dan Jerram (7:06 pm), Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre.

**ABSENT:** Robert Boyan, David Krimmel, Lori LaMere

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** Nancy Weiner-Anstey, Mary Ann Gunning, Joe Toro, Selectwoman Laura Garay (7:08 pm), Kathryn Boughton – Republican American (7:09 pm).

Chairman Russo called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.**

Chairman Russo seated John Burdick for Robert Boyan and Bill Baxter for David Krimmel.

**2. FARMINGTON VALLEY VISITORS ASSOCIATION – Nancy Weiner-Anstey**

Chairman Russo welcomed Nancy Weiner-Anstey of the Farmington Valley Visitor's Association. She shared handouts and explained the role of the Visitor's Association as a private non-profit that does not receive any state or federal funding instead operating on the membership dues that they receive.

Their offices are located in the Avon Village Marketplace with events, brochures and business cards posted in the lobby open to the public 6 days a week. She prepares a monthly newsletter that includes as much information as members give her that goes out to 900+ individuals by email and 50 individuals by snail mail. When she has 3 or 4 additional events she may put out additional eblasts.

Mr. Casey inquired about the cost to the town to belong to the Association. Ms. Lloyd clarified that we are already a member and Ms. Weiner-Anstey explained that annual municipal dues are \$1,000.

Mr. Burdick inquired how they operate with the State Tourism districts and Ms. Weiner-Anstey clarified that Avon, Granby & Canton are in the Central District whereas New Hartford is in the Western District. She indicated that their mission is to promote events in New Hartford and requested to be on the mailing list to receive the recreation mailings. Secretary Ventre will get a copy of the brochure to her.

Mr. Casey commented that as a new member of the Commission, he sees that we need to promote the recreational opportunities, and events of the town. He inquired about the possibility of posting events at their offices. Ms. Weiner-Anstey indicated that events can be posted in the lobby that is open to the public, but that she rents

space and signage along Route 44 would need to be cleared through the property owner and Avon Planning & Zoning.

Ms. Donaldson inquired about the deadline for submitting events to her newsletter. Ms. Weiner-Anstey replied that she typically tries to put together her newsletter around the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month and events should be sent to her personal email to be included in that newsletter.

Mr. Brett inquired whether she could offer suggestions on what New Hartford could do to improve their marketing. Ms. Weiner-Anstey replied that Simsbury does an exceptional job of promoting themselves but they do have paid staff to do that. She has become very involved and could do so for New Hartford as well. Additionally, she is willing to sit in on Committee meetings and offer marketing guidance.

Ms. Weiner-Anstey indicated that members of the EDC could write a monthly paragraph to promote events within New Hartford and she could include them in the monthly e-blast. Ms. Lloyd commented that there are not many events listed in the guide for New Hartford. Ms. Weiner-Anstey noted that she does not have many member businesses in New Hartford and would appreciate any contacts that Commission members could provide. She does intend to reach out to the Business Council to reach potential members.

Mr. Casey suggested that the town as a member could allocate funds to take out an ad to promote next year's fishing derby. Ms. Lloyd asked when the brochure is published and was told that it is published in the fall. Mr. Burdick suggested that the town should plan an ad for this fall to promote the Town For All Seasons motto and encourage visitors to the town.

All members thanked Ms. Weiner-Anstey for attending the meeting.

**MOTION** Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Burdick, to move item 4 up on the agenda to allow Ms. Gunning to speak next.

Unanimously approved.

#### **4. LITCHFIELD HILLS TRIATHALON – JULY 17 – Mary Ann Gunning**

Chairman Russo recognized Mary Ann Gunning of Chapin Park Bed & Breakfast. She shared a map of the Litchfield Hills Triathlon and indicated that she has been working with Josh Miller of the Hartford Marathon Group, but does not have any official authority from the town. Ms. Gunning asked to be involved in any action that the Commission takes for this event.

Last year, Ms. Gunning approached First Selectman Jerram and he had signs made to welcome the triathlon participants to town. The signs were very well received by participants and this year they would like to expand the opportunities for local businesses. There are typically 250-350 participants who bring along 1 or more family members and friends for support. This is a wonderful opportunity for visitors to come to New Hartford and feel welcomed. She commented that before Mystic was a tourist

destination, they used to post signs in all the businesses welcoming whatever group was visiting and it really worked well.

She would like the Commission to approach local businesses to offer discounts to participants, especially restaurants. If possible, it would be nice to have the food ban lifted at Brodie Park to allow food trucks with water, coffee and donuts for the attendees. Mr. Casey indicated that this would be limited to local New Hartford businesses who wish to participate. Historically, attendees have needed to bring their own refreshments. First Selectman Jerram explained that as a rule vendors are not permitted at Brodie as that could interfere with “quiet enjoyment” of the park. He agreed that the Board of Selectmen could consider allowing vendors for this event.

Ms. Gunning commented that prior planning is essential to energize the community to come out and cheer on the participants. She was at Dunkin Donuts last year and only 5 people were there to cheer on the participants.

Additionally, she is hoping to coordinate cash prizes or gift certificates for the winners. She would like to see the Business Council have a table at the event to direct people where they might go afterward. The Hartford Marathon group will send out a newsletter a week prior to the event and can include website links and restaurants offering discounts. Ms. Gunning asked if it is possible for attendees to be permitted to swim at Brodie after the event without purchasing a day pass. Mr. Jerram commented that historically the visitors are gone by 11:00 am without a trace left behind.

Ms. Lloyd suggested that attendees might not be interested in swimming, but perhaps we could prepare for something that they would be interested in doing. Ms. Gunning commented that most of the people who have stayed with her want to take a shower after the race, which is why she thought of swimming. She always allows her guests to return to her inn to shower and change clothes before they leave.

**MOTION** Mr. Casey, second Mr. Brett, to endorse Mary Ann Gunning to act as a liaison to work with Josh Miller of the Hartford Marathon group for the Litchfield Hills Triathlon on behalf of the EDC.

Ms. Lloyd clarified that she would like Ms. Gunning to report back to the EDC with her progress. She then called the motion.

Unanimously approved.

### **3. VISIT FROM LOCAL BUSINESS – Parrott Delaney Tavern**

Chairman Russo shared that Jim Parrott, owner of the Parrott Delaney Tavern would not be able to attend this evening, but he had asked him to answer a few questions to offer insight to the Commission.

A copy of Jim Parrott’s email was shared with the Commission. Chairman Russo shared the questions that were asked and his responses. Mr. Parrott asked that all members read his responses and share feedback.

Ms. Lloyd commented that she agreed with Mr. Parrott's request for a bakery as a complementary business. Ms. Donaldson commented that it is hard to sustain that type of business unless you are right on the street and have the traffic.

Ms. Casey noted that the kiosk at the corner of 219 and 44 which was spearheaded by David Childs offered advertising to local businesses. He commented that perhaps Parrott Delaney could consider advertising on that kiosk. Mr. Burdick inquired where those funds are paid. Mr. Jerram indicated that he didn't know. Mr. Casey commented that he remembers paying the fee to David Childs perhaps to Friends of New Hartford. Mr. Jerram committed to checking into ownership of the kiosk for the next meeting.

Mr. Brett commented that the reason behind the business profile is to listen to local businesses. After reading this, he notes 2 issues, Mr. Parrott is concerned about talent in staffing and suggests possible future growth potential while asking for the bridge. Mr. Brett likes the downtown plan and believes that the bridge will be an asset when it can be built. Mr. Jerram indicated that the grant was not funded initially but could potentially be funded in the next round.

Mr. Burdick noted that although the Parrott might be an anchor in the building, there is a real arts focus in that building. Ms. Donaldson suggested that EDC could offer endorsement at P&Z when Mr. Parrott applies for outdoor seating and other opportunities. Mr. Burdick commented that when visiting as patrons, members should reach out to him.

Mr. Casey indicated he will follow-up with Jim Parrott about the kiosk.

## **5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

March 14, 2016 regular meeting

**MOTION** Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Donaldson, to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2016 regular meeting as amended.

Secretary Ventre commented that First Selectman Jerram is listed among those present in error as he did not attend the March meeting, but she had not removed his name when copying the names from the February minutes.

Unanimously approved. Mr. Baxter abstained.

## **6. FOI REQUIREMENTS FOR TASK FORCES AND SUBCOMMITTEES**

Mrs. LaPlante explained that when conducting the business of the town with 3 or more individuals, the public has a right to know what is happening and therefore an agenda needs to be posted 24 hours prior and conducted in a public place.

Mr. Russo noted that blank templates had been sent out with the March minutes for members to use and Secretary Ventre can assist as needed.

## **7. SIGNAGE COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Mr. Baxter shared that the signage committee is ready to go, but the proposal needs to be submitted to Planning and Zoning. Ruth will present on Wednesday as part of her report and request guidance from the Commission.

Ms. Lloyd suggested that having the signs in a location where there are no stop lights would make it difficult for people to see. Mr. Baxter agreed that initially the signs could be placed near a stop light to generate interest and once the public becomes familiar with them, they could be moved along Route 44.

Mr. Baxter indicated that the initial banners will be welcome to New Hartford and Town for All Seasons. Ms. Lloyd stressed that she believes it is important to promote fishing and has offered to pay for the fishing banners.

Additionally, for the more specific street sign designs, Jeremy will prepare some samples in burgundy to continue with the color scheme that David had started. Mr. Casey commented that he would like to see a brighter color as the banners were not as eye-catching as he would have liked. Mr. Baxter noted that samples will be made to show how they look for the Commission to consider.

## **8. UPDATES FROM TASK FORCES**

Marketing – Ms. Donaldson shared that she has been receiving information from town groups to promote on social media and her team has continued to do that. She has been focusing on the fishing derby.

Downtown Initiative – Mr. Burdick shared that he has been conversing with Connecticut Main Street and received guidance on bringing in the support of Planning & Zoning. Additionally, the goals of the group need to be identified and clarified with the Board of the Selectmen. He mentioned that Simsbury had established a non-profit in order to submit for grant funding that is not available to municipalities and they will be researching that. Mr. Brett inquired about members of the group. Mr. Burdick indicated that the membership is coalescing and evolving.

Rails to Trails – Mr. Baxter indicated that they have not progressed since the town has two grant applications submitted to the state and we are awaiting responses and warmer temperatures to complete soil studies for feasibility. Canton will connect from their end. Mr. Burdick inquired about the time-frame to hear back on the grant. Mr. Baxter clarified that they will not know until the State budget is finalized. Mr. Brett asked if the intent is for the State to tell us which option is the best for us to pursue. Mr. Jerram indicated that this is the precursor to the community connectivity program which makes more grant funds available. Mr. Brett questioned if there is anything else

that can be done while waiting for the grant responses. Mr. Baxter indicated that we can only wait.

Grand List Development – Chairman Russo noted that he has not been able to schedule a joint meeting with P&Z and WPCA, but will attend Wednesday's P&Z meeting. He hopes to schedule a joint meeting with the three commissions before summer vacation season and include the Selectmen as well. He believes it is important that these commissions communicate well and determine how to best utilize their limited resources to the best advantage for the town. Ms. Lloyd commented that the article shared by Secretary Ventre and the First Selectman's Administrative Assistant Mrs. Hayward that listed New Hartford as the top town for first time home-buyers was exciting news and should be promoted. First Selectman Jerram shared that the new brewery is under construction. The corner lot will be coming to Planning and Zoning in the next 30 days.

## **9. FISHING DERBY**

Ms. Donaldson shared that the Derby Committee has decided to become a 501(c) as making it a town event requires special insurance. They are pursuing the appropriate filings to obtain that status. The committee would like to establish a trophy that is kept at Town Hall and lists the name of the winner of the biggest fish. She will speak with Mr. Jerram about what would be the best format and location. They are making signs which will be sold for \$20 to be placed out around the community and continuing to solicit donations.

## **10. CURRENT BUDGET BALANCE**

Chairman Russo indicated that since the fishing derby will not be taking the funds that had been budgeted by the Commission he believes that the town should instead prepare a packet for potential businesses to show the assets of the town. Mr. Burdick commented that he knows of an individual who could come to speak to the Commission. Mr. Burdick will inquire if he can speak at the May meeting.

Ms. Donaldson indicated that she has prepared media kits in the past and could lay it out, we would just need funds for printing. Mr. Russo questioned whether it is a conflict if Red Barn is hired to prepare the materials. Mr. Jerram indicated that there would need to be a bidding process. Ms. Donaldson indicated that she could adapt some prior formats she had prepared.

Mrs. LaPlante commented that in order for the funds to be spent from this budget year, the product must be delivered by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, the Commission would need to move forward quickly on preparing those materials. Mr. Jerram noted that if the services are contracted by June 30<sup>th</sup>, they could be delivered within 60 days.

Chairman Russo noted that printing these items might not cost \$2,000 and would like to entertain ideas to utilize those funds. Ms. Donaldson indicated that the marketing

subcommittee could come up with some ideas for marketing materials that could be presented at the next meeting.

Mr. Casey questioned whether some of the funds could be used to bring back the Farmer's Market. Mr. Burdick and Ms. Donaldson noted that local farmers are not willing to attend.

Ms. Lloyd commended the Recreation Commission on the program brochure that they sent out and the fact that they promoted the website. Additionally she suggested that a new member orientation be scheduled for the newly appointed members to bring them up to speed. All agreed that new members should be provided with copies of the minutes from the past few meetings so that they can become familiar with recent discussions prior to attending the meetings. Mr. Burdick inquired how far back minutes are available on the website. Secretary Ventre replied that minutes are posted back to 2014.

**MOTION** Ms. Donaldson, second Mr. Brett, for the marketing committee to meet and come up with options for marketing materials to be funded from the budget funds. Chairman Russo indicated that the media kit should be fully funded.

Unanimously approved.

#### **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

No additional business.

#### **12. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION** Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Burdick, to adjourn at 9:00 pm; unanimously approved.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Debbie Ventre  
Commission Secretary**