

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2016 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Robert Boyan, Jim Brett, Jack Casey (7:06 pm), David Krimmel, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd; Mark Russo; Alternate John Burdick; Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre.

ABSENT: Cindy Donaldson, Lori LaMere, Alternate Bill Baxter

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Mary Ann Gunning, Kathryn Boughton – Republican American, Selectman Laura Garay (7:13 pm)

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

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Mr. Burdick was seated for Lori LaMere.

2. VISIT FROM LOCAL BUSINESS – Mary Stevens – Mary Stevens Realty

Chairman Russo advised that since Commissioner LaMere is ill Mary Stevens Realty will be rescheduled for another date.

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd, to add Mary Ann Gunning to the agenda. *Unanimously approved.*

Ms. Gunning shared that she had attended a meeting today with ctvisit.com. She learned that the town can have a free site on ctvisit.com where we can promote restaurants, fishing, hiking, farming and special events. They like to have lots of pictures and a person can update the page at any time. Articles can be submitted about events in town that ctvisit.com will post.

Mr. Burdick inquired about whether Ms. Gunning had statistics on the number of hits/clicks they receive. Ms. Gunning noted that usage of the site has increased by 79% this year. A representative of ctvisit.com is willing to meet with the town and Ms. Gunning thought this Commission and the Business Council would be an appropriate audience.

Ms. Lloyd noted that if we set up this page we must link to our town website. She commented that even when we get to the marketing section this Commission needs staffing to help with coordinating the efforts without imposing on Secretary Ventre's time. Chairman Russo noted that he also believes that a part-time person is needed.

Chairman Russo summarized that he will contact Randy Fiveash of ctvisit.com to present at a Special Meeting of the EDC and the Business Council. Ms. Lloyd suggested that the Board of Selectmen also be invited to this session.

A discussion ensued about the benefit of free advertising and the possibility of promoting the town via free sites. However, maintaining the sites and keeping the information current would be critical to making the effort worthwhile. Mr. Casey suggested that a possible solution for manpower would be to hire a student from the Graphics Department at Northwest Community College on a part-time basis to help to maintain these sites.

Mr. Krimmel noted that the first step needs to be identification of the tasks to be completed and bring that information to the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance. Mr. Boyan stated that he now owns "ATownforAllSeasons.com" and will donate that to the town. He suggests that some of the tasks need to be separate from the town due to restrictions on what can be placed on the town website.

Mr. Brett commented that once the media kit is developed it will help with marketing our brand no matter what the venue. He believes we need a "Brand Manager" to take on this responsibility whether it is a student, a volunteer or a couple extra hours per week for an existing staff member. He will endeavor to develop a written description of the position responsibilities.

3. SKI SUNDOWN – MDC DISCUSSION

Chairman Russo recognized Mr. Krimmel to summarize a meeting which was held at Ski Sundown a week or so ago regarding their water needs for efficient snow making. Mr. Switzgale has approached the Metropolitan District Commission regarding purchasing water to make snow at the optimal times for snow making. MDC indicated that they need approval from the State to sell him the water.

If approved, Ski Sundown plans to take water from the Saville Dam which is a source for drinking water for Hartford. The pipe that provides the drinking water is at the base of Lake McDonough, so that pipe could be tapped to draw water up to the pond at Ski Sundown to be used for snowmaking.

Mr. Krimmel suggests that if the Commissioners agree that this is a good option for the Town that a letter be drafted to Mr. Switzgale expressing the support of the Commission for his proposal. He read a draft of a suggested letter.

Ms. Lloyd suggested that the Commissioners have an opportunity to review the information and consider the impact prior to voting on the letter. Chairman Russo inquired if any other Commissions have committed to supporting the proposal. Mr. Krimmel indicated that he is presenting the to the EDC first, but intends to approach other Commissions to solicit their support.

Mrs. LaPlante commented that the State has decided that all water in the State belongs to the State. She clarified that Mr. Switzgale is concerned that his current permit to draw water from his pond which drains Ratlum Brook could be revoked. Mr. Boyan noted that this answers his question as to why he is pursuing this now when the State is facing a drought. Members further discussed the fact that water used for snowmaking does return to the watershed.

Ms. Gunning noted that the letter should also note the impact of the ski area on the local economy such as the 500 jobs created. Mr. Casey noted that perhaps this Commission should offer their support and then get the support of the other stakeholders.

MOTION Mr. Russo, second Mr. Burdick, that members will review the presentation after receipt by email and notify Secretary Ventre via email by Sunday evening if they agree to send the letter. *Unanimously approved.*

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

September 12, 2016 regular meeting

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Mr. Brett, to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2016 regular meeting. *Unanimously approved.* Mr. Krimmel, Mr. Casey and Ms. Lloyd abstained.

October 17, 2016 regular meeting

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Krimmel, to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2016 regular meeting. *Unanimously approved.* Mr. Boyan and Mr. Russo abstained.

5. MEDIA KIT UPDATE

Mr. Burdick mentioned that he and Ms. Lloyd had met. Mrs. LaPlante shared that she had received an offer from a company similar to the "Mail-A-Map" who would give us 1,000 free folders with advertisements from 12 local businesses who we can specify to be only New Hartford businesses. This company also can prepare newsletters where they sell ads that pay for the copying, but we would pay the postage to mail them. The Commission would need to work on developing any copy and inserts to be included.

Mr. Burdick added that he had contacted the NWHCOG to learn about comparable towns and their marketing strategies. He learned that we had missed some opportunities for advertising in work that had been done through a grant. He shared samples of packets prepared by Burlington, Kent and Discover Northwest CT. Mr. Burdick also mentioned a couple of contact names who would be willing to present to the Commission at a future meeting.

Ms. Lloyd noted that the committee agreed that the free folder is a good idea, but did not feel that the town could be promoting specific businesses who were tapped to advertise to pay for the folders. She feels that it is important that the Town's folder be consistent in promoting the town's brand much like Coca-Cola does. Additionally, the town folder needs to be something timeless as advertisers may come and go. Mr. Boyan noted that the free sample could be used to sell the Town on the concept of creating a folder.

Ms. Gunning inquired about the cost of advertising on the "free" folder and noted that cost to the businesses might be prohibitive. Mrs. LaPlante noted that they would

prefer to have the concept design prior to selling the advertisements. She will check on the cost to businesses to ensure it is affordable.

Ms. Lloyd noted that the advertisers might like to receive some of the folders to disseminate to their customers. Ms. Gunning might like to use the folders for her welcome packets or something.

MOTION Mr. Brett, second Mr. Burdick, to have Janet Carlson of One Eleven Group attend the December Meeting. *Unanimously approved.*

Chairman Russo noted that Mary Stevens Realty will be invited back for January.

6. SIGNAGE COMMITTEE UPDATE

Chairman Russo asked for an update on the signage committee. Ms. Lloyd noted that First Selectmen Jerram was planning to meet with the Public Works employees about getting the signs installed.

Ms. Lloyd also indicated that Planning & Zoning does not want to pursue a variance for the four sided banner signs at this time.

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Burdick, to table the banners until next fiscal year. *Unanimously approved.*

7. RAILS TO TRAILS UPDATE

Mr. Brett noted that the feasibility study is ongoing and there has not been much change since last month. He summarized the progress noted last month for those who were not present.

He also commented that the committee attended Anne Hall's lecture on the Railroads of New Hartford for historical reference as to the location of prior trestles for potential gorge crossing. He noted that a gorge crossing would be a preferred option due to the beautiful views and keeping the trail more level but it might be cost prohibitive.

Ms. Garay commented on the difficulties faced in the gorge crossing and issues with the fracturing of the ledge and the narrowness of the path creating difficulties in getting equipment in place.

8. ZIP CODE STICKERS / LIGHT NEW HARTFORD GIVEAWAY

Mr. Burdick shared that he was at a restaurant in West Hartford and couldn't read the menu. The waiter gave him a little flashlight which he could keep. Jeremy Schaller who is also on the Board of the Beekley Library came up with a draft design for a giveaway at Light New Hartford. Mr. Burdick indicated that Mr. Schaller has sponsors lined up to fund 500-600 flashlights. He would like to see the EDC fund \$150 toward the purchase of these items.

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Casey, to contribute \$150 toward the flashlights for Light New Hartford. *Unanimously approved.*

Mr. Burdick indicated that Peggy's Promos can prepare the zip code stickers again. The format would need to be changed to include the branding "A Town for All Seasons" with the fonts aligned between the pieces. A quote for the cost should be brought to the commission for approval next month.

9. CURRENT BUDGET BALANCE

The budget summary was passed around. Secretary Ventre noted that the charge for Pam Colombie as EDC secretary was charged in error and will be removed.

Chairman Russo noted that he had seen the invoice for Write Way signs prior to the close of the fiscal year and questioned why it had not been paid in the prior fiscal year. Secretary Ventre noted that she had inquired and been told that the Bookkeeper did not receive the invoice until after the fiscal year had closed. Ms. Lloyd noted that the invoice is for 18 signs and only 11 were received. The seven additional signs that Chairman Russo ordered have not been received to her knowledge. She will investigate and confirm that all signs have been received.

Mr. Burdick commented that there is a charge of \$200 against the Commission budget that was not voted and approved by the Commission members. Mr. Burdick noted that he would question the value of the Farmington Valley Visitors Association next year. Mr. Boyan and Mr. Brett agreed.

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Mr. Boyan, to remove the Farmington Valley Visitors Association from the EDC budget for next year. *Unanimously approved.*

10. APPROVAL OF 2017 MEETING SCHEDULE

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd, to approve the 2017 Meeting Schedule. *Unanimously approved.*

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

12. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Mr. Russo, to adjourn at 9:02 pm; *Unanimously approved.*

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Secretary**