

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, JULY 14, 2014 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL – SESSIONS CONFERENCE ROOM**

PRESENT: Chairman David Childs, David Krimmel, Donna LaPlante, Mark Russo, Bob Switzgable; Alternate Cindy Donaldson

ABSENT: Bill Baxter, Bill Bohan, Jim Brett, Shelley Lloyd; Alternates John Burdick and Lynn Charest.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Troy Lamere and Joe Toro

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Chairman David Childs called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM. Ms. Donaldson was seated for Bill Baxter

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
June 9, 2014 regular meeting.**

MOTION Mr. Krimmel, second Mrs. LaPlante, to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2014 regular meeting; unanimously approved, Ms. Donaldson, Mr. Russo and Mr. Switzgable abstained.

3. OTHER BUSINESS:

Chairman Childs proposed that the agenda be modified to permit Mr. Lamere and Mr. Toro to speak before the subcommittee reports in order to allow them to leave if desired.

Mr. Lamere indicated that as he had offered at the last meeting, he had obtained a list of property owners along the proposed Rails to Trails route and had been privileged to follow the route with the subcommittee. Mr. Krimmel clarified that the proposed trail will run closer to route 44 than the railroad bed. Mr. Lamere hopes that the trail will run along the Marandino's side of Route 44 and has obtained the list of property owners to contact for their consent in order to proceed with the request for grant funds. He would like to form a committee to present the project to the property owners in the most favorable light.

Additionally, Mr. Lamere has done research to identify how many industrial, commercial and apartment spaces are vacant in town. He would like volunteers from the EDC to assist with the project. He would like to compile a list with square footage in order to attract tenants and businesses to move into town. Ms. Donaldson inquired about the process followed to obtain this information. Mr. Lamere indicated that he had worked with the Assessor's office to obtain lists of the commercial, industrial and apartment properties in town. He has completed some due diligence to identify which properties are currently occupied versus available. Ms. Donaldson inquired if Town Hall maintains those records. Mrs. LaPlante answered that the town does not have a means to identify those properties that are vacant. Businesses do not typically notify the town when they close or are about to go out of business.

Mrs. LaPlante also proposed that the committee endorse Mr. Lamere's efforts so that he can present identification as the Assessor does when she does site visits. The lists that the Assessor provided show the number of units in each property, but does not show which are occupied or vacant. A discussion ensued about how the number of vacant properties could be determined, whether by searching Craig's list or Zillow or speaking with the landlords. Mr. Lamere believes that obtaining this information would help to identify the direction the town needs to take including whether additional rental residential areas are needed. He also commented about feedback he received while campaigning from senior residents who were concerned about the ability to remain in town after needing to sell their homes.

Mr. Krimmel volunteered to serve as liaison with Mr. Lamere and Mr. Toro. Mr. Russo commented that a neighboring business had inquired about moving a machine shop into New Hartford and is currently looking to move his business to Burlington because he did not receive a positive response from Town Hall.

Ms. Donaldson inquired if once compiled this information would be posted on the town website. Mr. Lamere and Mr. Switzgable commented that they certainly hoped so. A discussion continued about the importance of having this information readily available to potential tenants.

Motion Mr. Krimmel, second Ms. Donaldson that a letter be sent from the Commission to the First Selectman and the Land Use Officer to refer all inquiries for potential businesses to the Economic Development Commission. Mr. Krimmel is disappointed that the Commission was not informed about the inquiry to build a machine shop in New Hartford.

Mr. Childs commented that this individual has specific needs and does not want to rent so there are limited locations that would be suitable. He believes that space may become available at the Waring Building due to the foreclosure. Mr. Lamere commented that there are other spaces in town which would be appropriate.

Ms. Donaldson inquired if the First Selectman ever meets with the Chairs of the various Commissions. Mr. Childs responded that he and Mr. Krimmel were trying to set up a meeting between the chairs of the EDC, Board of Finance, WPCA and Planning & Zoning and the First Selectman. That may happen at the August EDC meeting.

Mr. Russo commented that once the list is compiled he would like to revisit the previous suggestion of contacting the national pharmacy chains about opening a location here. Mr. Lamere would like to see New Hartford get a hotel/motel and a pharmacy. Mr. Switzgable commented that we would be better off increasing the number of Bed & Breakfasts because there is not enough demand for a hotel/motel.

Mr. Krimmel commented that there are not enough people living in town to support these businesses. Until there are more people living here, it will not be possible to attract these types of businesses. Mr. Switzgable agreed and indicated that you cannot dictate the type of people who live here. Ms. Donaldson commented that we need something to attract more people to live here in the center of town. She believes that we need to pursue the Rails to Trails project as quickly as possible. Mr. Lamere agreed that the project will induce excitement. He has lived in the area his entire life and believes that Collinsville really took off after their trail was completed. Mr. Toro commented that Collinsville had the vision and developed the trail. Mr. Lamere agreed that the trail needs to have a destination and stops along the way; it cannot be like the Torrington trail which starts and ends in the middle of nowhere.

Ms. Donaldson inquired if the Town has a new business packet to give out to potential businesses. Mrs. LaPlante replied that we do not. Mr. Krimmel asked for a sample in order to assemble one and Ms. Donaldson will look for one.

Mr. Childs attended the Planning & Zoning Commission to discuss directional signs for those businesses that are off the main roads. Ideally, 2 sided signs will be available that will be mounted on the street signs directing visitors to businesses located on the side roads. He is hopeful that the signs will happen to help direct potential customers.

Mr. Toro inquired about the proposal that he and Mr. Lamere had presented at the last meeting. Mr. Childs indicated that he had spoken with Selectman Jack Casey about the property and believes that the Town should hear something in the next couple of weeks. A discussion continued about whether there would be a rental agreement or some deal made regarding outstanding taxes on the property.

Mr. Childs revisited the pending motion on the floor. Motion Mr. Krimmel, second Ms. Donaldson that a letter be sent from the Commission to the First Selectman and the Land Use Officer to refer all inquiries for potential businesses to the Economic Development Commission. Unanimously approved.

3. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES.

Mr. Childs commented that the subcommittees have not been meeting. He suggests that the subcommittees make the effort to meet and come up with feedback/suggestions before the next meeting.

A. Support Existing Businesses - Mr. Krimmel.

Mr. Krimmel has not met with the other members of his subcommittee, but received some feedback against his proposal about the selection process for listing businesses on the website. He believes that the Visitor tab is fairly complete with businesses that would be attractive to visitors but the Business tab is incomplete. It currently lists mostly those businesses that appear on the Visitor page. He proposes that the EDC place an ad or notice in the Independent to promote the work that has

been done so far on the website and invite businesses to be included by notifying us. Those businesses that do not respond cannot complain about being excluded.

Mr. Krimmel read the notice he prepared for publication.

“NOTICE – All Businesses in New Hartford. The Economic Development Commission in cooperation with the Selectman’s Office has been updating the Town Web Site www.town.new-hartford.ct.us. We have focused on those businesses that we feel would be of interest to visitors from out of town. If you go to the web site and press enter on the Visitors Button you will see what we have done. We are now in the process of entering those other businesses that are more likely to be of interest to our citizens or investors who may want to establish a new business in New Hartford. We are listing those under the Business Button on the Home Page. We have some businesses under the following categories, “Agricultural”, “Retail”, “Lodging and Dining”, “Sports and Leisure” and “Services”. We will be adding the following categories, “Manufacturing”, “Home Improvements”, “SuperMarkets”, “Carpenters, Electricians, Plumbers”. Lawn and Landscape Services”, “Doctors, Dentists and Optometrists”. If we have not listed your business already, please contact the Town Clerk’s Office so that we can complete our work.”

Ms. Donaldson suggested that Realtors be included in the categories listed. The notice will be prepared and sent to the Independent as a press release.

Mr. Krimmel would like to revisit the events calendar on the website and have the events linked together both on the website and through the Independent. There is currently no focal point to link events together to attract people to spend more than a day at a specific event. There is a bicycle race on Sunday, but no events preceding or following it. Mr. Switzgable commented that 20 years ago he sat on a focus group where the library intended to serve as a focal point for town events. Mr. Toro commented that the town needs a marketing person. Mr. Krimmel believes that first we need to identify what the marketing person needs to do. Mr. Russo suggested that the Commission earmark a portion of this year’s budget toward a marketing person. Mr. Childs does not believe the budget is sufficient to recruit someone. Mr. Krimmel showed a newspaper article about the Torrington marketing specialist and the \$61,000 expense which netted no results. Mr. Lamere volunteered to help Ms. Donaldson to collect the information on town events and create a social media presence. Ms. Donaldson will make an effort to devote some time to establishing a presence on Facebook and Twitter in order to be prepared to disseminate information on events as they become available. Mr. Krimmel clarified that he would like to see a clearinghouse to limit what events will be included.

B. Expand the Local Economy.

No Report

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

No Report

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

Mr. Childs reviewed the minutes from the last meeting and commented that the signs which had been voted upon have arrived and are waiting in the First Selectman's office.

Mr. Childs also commented upon the site visit to the WPCA facility and expressed disappointment at the lack of connections to the water and sewer lines. He believes that it would be more beneficial to the town and the WPCA for the line to be expanded toward the industrial park to enable the Hurley proposal to proceed. Mr. Krimmel commented that based upon Mr. Hurley's presentation at Planning & Zoning he understood that Mr. Hurley would pay to extend the line onto Greenwoods Road and that was why he needed 200 units to justify the expense. Mr. Lamere commented that he has attended the WPCA meetings and in order for Mr. Hurley to proceed he has to pay to connect the 12 houses whose septic system is located where he plans to develop. The grant money cannot be reallocated from Cottage Street to Greenwoods Road under the terms of the grant. Mrs. LaPlante clarified that Mr. Hurley has an agreement with those 12 houses wherein they must connect once the line is available, but he plans to pay for their connection as a gesture of goodwill.

Mrs. LaPlante explained that the proposed changes to the website discussed at the last meeting are possible with a great deal more maintenance. She showed a potential format of how the pages could be set up and maintained. It was clarified that to set these pages up and maintain them would be more time than Debbie Ventre currently has available during the work day. Mrs. LaPlante indicated that she cannot give additional time due to the workload in her office. Ms. Donaldson suggested that the EDC hire Debbie Ventre to maintain those pages outside of her town working hours. Mr. Childs asked for figures. Ms. Ventre responded that she would like to investigate appropriate rates for those types of services.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Ms. Donaldson, second Mr. Switzgale, to adjourn at 8:31 PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Ventre
Commission Clerk