

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2017 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Robert Boyan, David Krimmel, Lori LaMere, Shelley Lloyd; Mark Russo; Alternates Bill Baxter (left at 7:50) and John Burdick; Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre.

ABSENT: Jim Brett, Jack Casey, Donna LaPlante,

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Grady Allen, Selectman Laura Garay (7:05 pm)

Chairman Russo called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Mr. Burdick was seated for Mr. Brett and Mr. Baxter was seated for Mrs. LaPlante.

Mr. Baxter advised that he would need to leave early and requested that he be permitted to present first.

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Ms. LaMere, to move up item 6 on the agenda. *Unanimously approved.*

6. RAILS TO TRAILS UPDATE

Mr. Baxter shared that they received the findings from the consultant on the Satan's Kingdom section of the trail. Following the railroad bed would be an expensive but not impossible option which would also be the most scenic and most level. If we bond this with Federal and State funds it is feasible. The second portion is the traffic study portion through Pine Meadow which should be coming back shortly. Once those pieces come together there will be serious discussion in the public sector on how to proceed. He noted that Commission Member Jim Brett has done a phenomenal job at keeping this project moving.

Mr. Baxter also commented that he has learned that there is a Capital Expenditures Commission meeting coming up and he feels that the Economic Development Commission should have input. Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward had left copies of the Capital Project List identified by the Board of Selectmen at their most recent meeting. Mr. Baxter suggested that all members review this list and provide feedback to Chairman Russo that he can convey to the Board of Selectmen.

Additionally, Mr. Baxter noted that he has been a member of the Northwest Economic Development Commission for the past seven years. He has been asked by this Commission to reup. Mr. Baxter will be preparing a report and believes New Hartford could use additional representation.

Ms. Lloyd commented that Kathryn Boughton had written an excellent article on the last Rails to Trails meeting. A discussion continued about several articles that had recently been published. Mr. Krimmel asked whether Mr. Baxter and Mr. Brett could present the proposed route at the next EDC meeting and have the group develop the best way to present the project to the town. Selectwoman Garay clarified that the funding mentioned in the Capital Plan is only for the Satan's Kingdom portion of the trail but that is the most expensive segment.

2. VISIT FROM Grady Allen – UpCountry Sportfishing

Chairman Russo welcomed Grady Allen. Mr. Allen indicated that he has lived in New Hartford his entire life. His store opened in the 1980's and grew in the 1990's and 2000's as interest in fly-fishing has grown.

Mr. Allen shared a brief history of how fishing on the Farmington has developed into a catch and release program that attracts anglers from all over the world. He estimates that fishing brings about 3.5 million dollars of revenue to the area and listed the restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and other businesses that benefit from the traffic. He noted that several homes in Barkhamsted have been purchased as weekend homes for fishermen although he is not aware of any in New Hartford. He stressed that New Hartford needs to protect the Farmington River as a major asset of the town. The drought this past summer was very scary as the water level in the river dropped very low at the end of the season. He also noted that we need to retain trees along the river because trout need that shade. Parking is also important to have available for anglers.

Mr. Allen suggests a business map with the river and businesses around it that can be handed out to visitors. The more that we can identify those businesses to those not familiar the better it will be for developing those businesses. He believes that New Hartford really needs to attract a nice hotel that could serve Ski Sundown in the winter and anglers in the summer. The bed and breakfasts are nice for couples but anglers are not always comfortable in that environment. A lodge has opened in Barkhamsted with 8 rooms and a Great Room on the river bank which has provided some lodging for the anglers.

Mr. Allen described that the East Branch of the Farmington River is basically a dry bed at this time although it was a stocked river when he was growing up. The West Branch that runs through downtown is where the water has been drawn down to supply the Stanley works down river. He noted that holding the water back on the East Branch creates an illusion that there is plenty of water to sell.

Mr. Krimmel summarized that he heard that we need to develop a map brochure and need to better manage the water levels in the river. Chairman Russo asked that Mr. Allen keep the Commission informed as his clubs develop a proposal and the Commission can potentially write a letter to support their suggestion. Mr. Boyan noted that a more even distribution of the water helps the ecosystems as well as the businesses along the river. Mr. Burdick added to Mr. Krimmel's summary that we also need accommodations for visitors. Mr. Boyan clarified that the map needs to show

recreation as well as businesses and asked Mr. Allen if his clients would be interested in an electronic version that could be accessed on their phones. Mr. Allen described a pad of maps where every business has a pad and you tear them off and mark specific locations on it. If that could be linked through the town website so that people would have it before they arrive it would be great. Chairman Russo mentioned that he would like to see this map appear in at least the new resident version of the media kit. Other members commented that it could actually be included in any version. Ms. Garay noted that she likes the idea of walking maps.

Chairman Russo and the Commission members thanked Mr. Allen for his time.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

December 12, 2016 regular meeting

Secretary Ventre noted that she had learned after publishing the minutes that Janet Carlson's father's name is spelled Aulay and the business name is the One Eleven Group not the 111 Group.

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd, to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2016 regular meeting as amended. *Unanimously approved.* Mr. Boyan & Ms. LaMere abstained.

4. DUE DILIGENCE – DISCOVERNWCT – John Burdick

Chairman Russo asked Mr. Burdick what he had learned. Mr. Burdick summarized the presentation by Janet Carlson on the work that had been funded by a grant to develop the DiscoverNWCT.com for those who were not present last month. Mr. Burdick indicated that he had followed up with Ms. Carlson and spoke with Jocelyn Ayers of the NHCOC. The State Office of Culture and Tourism has made a person available to assist with web-based marketing programs. Rather than going town to town, the program will be developed for the region and tie into ctvisit as well.

Ms. Lloyd noted that we had inquired about joining for part of the fiscal year and hopes that once this is finalized we would be able to do so.

5. SIGNAGE COMMITTEE UPDATE

Ms. Lloyd shared a photograph of one of the signs that has been installed. She also read an email from Christine Hayward clarifying that Jeremy will replace the missing signs. She noted that additional hiking signs will be made and that she would like to see downtown signs made with a straight arrow that read Thanks for Visiting on the back side.

7. REGIONAL PLAN INPUT – P&Z MEETING JANUARY 11TH

Mr. Burdick noted that Jocelyn Ayer is presenting to the Planning & Zoning Commission on Wednesday evening and the public can attend to hear her presentation. He encouraged all members to complete the NHCOC survey if they have not already done so.

8. MANUFACTURING WALK-THROUGH

Chairman Russo noted that he has not had an opportunity to follow-up with First Selectman Jerram on this.

9. CURRENT BUDGET BALANCE

The budget summary was passed around. Chairman Russo inquired about the technology line item on the Capital Budget and inquired if the town website fees could be paid from another budget since the Commission has other projects they would like to utilize those funds. Mr. Boyan noted that he believes it is possible to save money by utilizing a different vendor. Members discussed options for different functions that could be improved. Selectwoman Garay will check with Administrative Assistant Hayward on the term of the website contract and whether she would consider a new vendor.

The 2017-2018 budget process was discussed. Selectwoman Garay noted that the initial Board of Selectmen presentation to the Board of Finance is on February 14th. Chairman Russo asked that the proposed budget be sent to all Commission members with request for feedback in order to provide a budget request to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Burdick distributed a job description for an opening in Winsted and noted that this is a role that New Hartford needs. Mr. Boyan noted that if a similar role is part-time in another town, perhaps New Hartford could also hire that individual part-time.

Selectwoman Garay inquired about the Connecticut Main Street dues and what benefit the town receives from that membership. A discussion ensued on the programs offered by Connecticut Main Street and members were encouraged to sign up for their email newsletters. Mr. Krimmel noted that this Commission needs to develop a vision for the future of our Main Street.

10. MEDIA KIT / MARKETING / BRANDING

Ms. Lloyd noted that a couple media kit samples were shared previously. Although Asheville is significantly larger than New Hartford, she really liked that the brand was carried through on nearly every page. Mr. Boyan agreed that once a brand has been identified it should be implemented town wide. An RFP needs to be developed to

solicit bids for a town brand from graphic artists . Mr. Boyan noted that we need to file a copyright for A Town For All Seasons to protect the rights to it. Mr. Krimmel suggested a contest with a \$500 prize. Mr. Boyan also suggested that an opportunity be given to Oliver Wolcott, the Community College and UConn to get a young perspective. Ms. LaMere also suggested that the Regional 7 Art Department could have a contest as well. Mr. Boyan will look into what is involved in copyrighting the town theme.

Chairman Russo noted that he has subscribed to the New England Real Estate Journal and will be reaching out to the Economic Development Commission in Branford who was featured a few years ago and is a regular advertiser. He would like to see us partner with a local business for possibly 3 months in a row to see what kind of outcome or response could be achieved.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Mr. Burdick mentioned the Northwest Hills Council of Government Economic Development Seminar on January 30th. He also noted that the New Hartford Business Council has purchased ceremonial scissors for ribbon cuttings and will try to schedule them on the 3rd Thursday of each month. All Star Storage is on January 26th and Turning Point Realty is February 16th.

12. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Mr. Boyan, to adjourn at 9:12 pm; *Unanimously approved.*

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Secretary**