

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2017 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Robert Boyan, Jim Brett, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd; Mark Russo; Alternate John Burdick and Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre.

ABSENT: Jack Casey, Lori LaMere, David Krimmel, Alternate Bill Baxter,

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Bud Butler, Jean Cronauer, Seth “Rusty” Warner, Joe Toro, Maria Moore, Kathryn Boughton, Republican American, Bob Moore (7:21 pm)

Chairman Russo called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

John Burdick was seated for David Krimmel. Chairman Russo asked for a motion to allow an additional five minutes for the Open Space Presentation

MOTION Mr. Boyan, second Mr. Burdick to allow Rusty and Jean an additional five minutes. *Unanimously approved*

In the interest of saving time, Chairman Russo asked that members hold their questions and email Secretary Ventre so that they may be compiled into a list.

2. PRESENTATION FROM OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION COMMISSION – Jean Cronauer

Chairman Russo recognized Jean Cronauer, Chair of the Open Space Preservation Commission. Ms. Cronauer deferred to Rusty Warner to review the presentation.

Mr. Warner shared his background as a long term resident of New Hartford and noted that the Open Space Commission has not come before the Board of Finance to request to purchase property in a number of years. He described the 8.1 acre portion of the Butler property that the Town seeks to purchase for the trail and an agricultural easement on the 85.5 acre farm parcel. Mr. Warner noted that the advantages of the agricultural easement includes oversight of agricultural practices while the property remains on the tax rolls. The Open Space Preservation Commission believes that this project would carry out New Hartford’s vision as expressed in the Plans of Conservation and Development and our Open Space Plan. He also noted that this is one of the oldest parcels in town which was utilized as a farm dating back to colonial times.

The cost for this project is 237,532.50 or \$2,538 per acre for the town’s 45% share. The State share of 55% is \$5,100 per acre or \$239,827.50. Ms. Cronauer commented that the property owner is willing to accept payments over a two year period. She

noted that they had hoped to have all the financing determined but the State cuts in town funding have impacted the budget process. There is the possibility that the cost could be paid through a loan from the Open Space fund.

Mr. Warner noted that preserving this farmland as a local source for food is important.

Ms. Cronauer noted that Open Space land provides services for the town that include cleaning water, air and wildlife habitats. She noted that when prospective buyers look for places to live, recreation opportunities and open space are very desirable factors. Ms. Cronauer also commented that she would like to see EDC and the Open Space Preservation Commission become partners in working toward implementation of the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Ms. LaPlante inquired about the time frame for making the trail available to the public. Ms. Cronauer noted that the trail is nearly ready to go and the Commission expects that users would park at New Hartford Elementary School as it is a short walk from their lot to the trail area.

Mr. Russo inquired as to the end date for the State Grant funds. Mr. Warner indicated that an end date has not been indicated, but funds are going out and the funds could be depleted. Ms. Cronauer noted that the State representative is very excited about this property and the quality of the soils and would pay out the funds when the Town is ready.

Mr. Burdick inquired if the letter about the soil analysis would be available to the public. Ms. Cronauer stated that it could be and they have also have a letter of support from the FRWA.

Ms. Lloyd inquired about whether the land would remain protected if the town only owns the development rights. Ms. Cronauer indicated that the restrictions would be recorded on the land records. Mr. Boyan noted that the easement would need to be enforced by the State. Ms. Cronauer indicated that an entity at the Town level could also be listed on the easement in addition to the State.

Mr. Warner noted that this project is an investment in the Town which can really bring the various Boards and Commissions together. Ms. Cronauer noted that she would like to see the teachers from New Hartford Elementary to be able to use the trail as an outdoor classroom for nature walks.

Maria Moore inquired if the Town could require that the farming practices be such that there would not be a need for mitigation of run off from the farming practices. Mr. Boyan noted that unless specified in Statute, it would be difficult to enforce such requirements. Mr. Russo noted that he would like to see the lease for the current farmer renegotiated or in the future set up some portion of the property as community garden areas.

Ms. Moore also noted that she recalled reading about a farm in Simsbury where they did not lease to a farmer based on the type of practices they were using. Mr. Brett inquired as to the feasibility of requiring that future leases require organic farming

practices. Mrs. LaPlante noted that as a farmer she would not support making the requirements too restrictive. Unless one has been a farmer and had to use best management practices as approved by the USDA it would be difficult to relate to the situation.

Mr. Brett inquired if there are restrictions on the 8.1 acres which would prevent the creation of a paved multi-use trail such as the one in Canton. Mr. Boyan inquired if the State Assessment per acre of the property has been obtained. Mr. Butler commented that the assessed value is approximately \$10,000 per acre.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

January 9, 2017 regular meeting

Approval of the minutes of the January 9, 2017 regular meeting was postponed due to insufficient members present who attended the meeting.

February 13, 2017

MOTION Ms Lloyd, second Mr. Brett, to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2017 regular meeting. *Unanimously approved.* Mr. Burdick abstained.

4. UPDATE – DISCOVERNWCT – John Burdick

Mr. Burdick summarized that there is a proposal before the NHCOC and the Northwest Economic Development Group which would provide a page for the town on the Discover NWCT website that the town could expand upon. Until a decision is made there is not sufficient information to move forward. It is hoped that the agreement and costs can be finalized in order to utilize this year's budget funds and allocate funds in next year's budget.

5. RAILS TO TRAILS PRESENTATION TRIAL RUN – Jim Brett

Mr. Brett reviewed the presentation developed to promote the trail project and create a unified vision. He noted that three days per week he drives to Collinsville to run on their trail and then spends money at local businesses there. He would like to see that revenue here in New Hartford.

He presented the history of the project and noted that there is a clear precedent for success. New York State has recently announced the intention to develop a multi-use trail from Brooklyn to Buffalo. Connecticut currently has a number of trail areas and New Hartford is a "missing link" that would connect other trails together. Use from town residents and non-residents increases traffic and revenues to local businesses. Trail users spend more time and money than automobile users. Trails are proven to drive both urban and rural downtown redevelopment.

Mr. Brett would like to see us develop a “package” ready design so that we are prepared to apply for funding. Until the specific route is determined, we would not likely qualify for grant funds. It is imperative that the trail drive traffic to downtown and local businesses or the benefits may not be realized and it must connect to other trail systems.

Mr. Butler asked about the strategy of using the downtown center as a hub and whether they intend to work outward from the town or inward from a spoke. Mr. Brett indicated that the intent would be to start from the downtown area. Mr. Toro suggested that the Jones Mountain trunk line might be a good place to start. Mr. Butler clarified that there is a sewer trunk line and a water line under that area which could be impacted by heavy equipment. There is the potential to find a program to fund replacing those pipes and building the trail over it.

Mr. Burdick and other Commission members complimented Mr. Brett on his presentation and the work he has done. Ms. Cronauer suggested a “fifth” Thursday meeting when no other Commissions are meeting and invite members from all the other Boards and Commissions to hear the presentation and provide feedback.

6. WEBSITE HOSTING OPTIONS – Rob Boyan

Mr. Boyan shared that the cost of hosting a website is about \$20 per month through one of the vendors he found. The balance of what we are paying is for support. He shared a potential vendor who operates on the same framework and would migrate our website for free. He noted that to expand the website under these circumstances would involve a substantial expense. Drupal group that makes the software recommends black mesh which with what Virtual Town Hall uses.

Ms. Lloyd inquired about the possibility of asking Virtual Town Hall to freshen the look of our website. Mr. Boyan indicated that he would recommend that funds be allocated to update the site but he believes that the most cost effective way to do this would be to approach Virtual Town Hall to modify our site.

Mr. Burdick inquired about how this feeds to discoverct.com. Mr. Boyan indicated that it is just a matter of linking them together for a seamless transition but that is an expensive proposition. He would like to see the current website become more interactive for residents and users.

7. MEDIA KIT / MARKETING / BRANDING PROPOSAL

Ms. Lloyd shared that her Committee met and also discussed manpower and believe that anything contained within the media kit and the website cannot be done by volunteers and needs to be done by an employee. They believe that we should move forward with the design of the pocket folders. Everyone in Town Hall hands out “stuff”. The Committee believes they have a good idea of the contents for one side which includes: The Mail-A-Map, Lake McDonough brochure, and a revised New Hartford

brochure (Jack is researching). Ms. Lloyd also shared a sample of the new map being developed for the area with advertisements from local businesses and local features.

Ms. Lloyd noted that she had spoken with former Commission Member Cindy Donaldson who will donate her time to help to finalize the design for the pocket folders and get them to a printer. They need 300 dpi photographs of town scenery for use on the folders.

The Committee feels that the front of the folder should match the banners so that it is a clean and recognizable design.

Ms. Lloyd noted that Ms. Donaldson had received a price quote to print 500 at \$2 each noting that a higher quantity would reduce the per piece price.

8. BANNER DESIGN

Ms. Lloyd shared that Mr. Krimmel is looking into redesigning the banners with 4 pictures for the 4 seasons (bicyclist, skier, hiker, boating) with a green background and white graphics. The idea is to have a consistent branding design between the stationery, banners, and folders. Mr. Burdick suggested that having all 40 banners identical would not be practical. The quantities could be divided among 4 or 5 designs.

Mr. Russo shared mock-ups with clip art illustrating a concept with (skier, hiker, boating, and farm) for banners, stationery and folders. A discussion ensued about the samples created and whether interchangeable images would make sense and what images should be used.

Mr. Brett suggested selecting the top three and putting it out to a vote. Mr. Russo indicated that he would like to use the same images that were printed on the signs for consistency. Additionally, it is important to present the concepts to the Board of Selectmen prior to spending any funds.

9. CURRENT BUDGET BALANCE/BUDGET PROPOSAL

Secretary Ventre passed around copies of the current year's budget report, but due to the lateness of the hour no discussion occurred.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Mrs. LaPlante commented that at tonight's meeting, the Board of Selectmen appointed Mary Ann Gunning to the Economic Development Commission.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd, to adjourn at 9:11 pm; *Unanimously approved.*

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Secretary**