

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2017 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: John Burdick, Mary Ann Gunning, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd, Mark Russo; Alternates Bill Baxter and Midge Langston; and Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre.

ABSENT: Jim Brett, Jack Casey, Lori LaMere

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: None

Assistant Town Clerk and Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre administered the oath of office to John Burdick for his newly appointed term as Member.

Chairman Russo called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Mr. Baxter was seated for Mr. Brett. Ms. Langston was seated for Ms. LaMere.

3. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Chairman Russo announced that Mr. Burdick has been appointed a full member of the Commission by the Board of Selectmen.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

August 14, 2017 regular meeting

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Burdick, to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2017 regular meeting. *Unanimously approved.*

4. CTVISIT Presentation – October 16

Chairman Russo stated that everyone had a homework assignment to review the spreadsheet of the invitation list. He noted that he had added some business types that should be included. Secretary Ventre commented that she had based the initial list on the CT Visit criteria.

Mr. Burdick inquired of Ms. Gunning if the presentation discusses whether the Department of Agriculture promotes farms and has listings of tree farms, orchards etc. Ms. Gunning indicated that the presentation focuses on the tourism dollars that come into the State and the potential benefit to businesses who participate on the website.

Mrs. LaPlante noted that she does not want to disappoint attendees who might not read the full invitation to realize that they may not be featured on the CT Visit website.

A discussion of the appropriate wording for the invitation continued. Ms. Gunning suggested that the businesses that we really want to be there should receive a follow-up phone call or visit to encourage them to attend. Ms. Langston asked for clarification of how one would describe the benefits of attending the program. The program presents an opportunity for free advertising either on the website or via a network connection with a business that does appear on the website.

Mr. Burdick mentioned the prior discussion about inviting members of other Economic Development Commissions. Chairman Russo noted that he has them on his list. Mrs. LaPlante commented that based upon the Business Council experience with Canton members she would prefer to limit invitations to New Hartford businesses. Certainly if someone from another town wanted to attend they would not be turned away. Ms. Gunning noted that she would like to include Barkhamsted as they are similar in size to us and as such do not have the resources that are available to Torrington or Winchester.

Chairman Russo indicated that he would like members to think about wording for the invitation and send their thoughts to Secretary Ventre by Thursday Noon. Mr. Burdick noted that the Business Council is meeting Thursday morning. Chairman Russo questioned whether sending invitations this week is too early. Members suggested that a save the date email be sent followed by a formal invitation. Additionally if posters are prepared they could be posted immediately. Ms. Lloyd inquired if Secretary Ventre would be creating a Facebook event.

5. CURRENT BUDGET BALANCE

Secretary Ventre passed out copies of the Budget Summary Report. As there is no budget at this time, no discussion was needed.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Ms. Gunning asked what we get from our Connecticut Main Street dues. Mr. Burdick shared a webinar that is coming up on September 20th entitled "Working Together to Transform Main Streets and Leaders". The program will also be available on their website if members are not able to participate on that date. This is an example of the programs that are offered. Additionally they offer free advice and support in pursuing the Main Street system for member towns. He also noted that they have a new Executive Director who would like to attend a future meeting of the EDC.

Ms. Lloyd described the potential design for the cover of the folder. She questioned which town logo should be used. Chairman Russo noted that at this time since there is not currently a budget this project should be on hold.

Chairman Russo mentioned that the CT Visit presentation will be held on the date of the regular October meeting. He inquired if members would like to schedule a special meeting to meet with the candidates for First Selectmen to hear their platforms. Mr.

Baxter noted that he did not believe that an EDC meeting is an appropriate forum for that discussion.

Mrs. LaPlante shared a proposal for a signature event for New Hartford. She proposes that New Hartford offer a Grape Festival similar to one that she has previously attended in Naples, New York. She passed around her iPad with the website for the Naples festival and shared slices of a grape pie. Chairman Russo suggested combining "Hops and Grapes Festival". Mrs. LaPlante noted that similarities to the Naples festival would depend upon the health department requirements. At their festival, residents along Main Street erect tents to sell grape related products and children have lemonade type stands. Barden Farms could offer grape jelly or jams. Donna Howard could make grape pies. There are currently two vineyards in town and two more that will be opening. Mr. Baxter commented that this is a "grape idea".

Ms. Lloyd noted that the event should be planned for a weekend that does not conflict with other events. Mrs. LaPlante shared that her office had received a number of calls inquiring about the wine tasting. Mr. Burdick commented that it could become a combined event, with the wine tasting on Friday night, the festival on Saturday and then New Hartford Day on Sunday.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Mr. Russo, to adjourn at 8:02 pm; *Unanimously approved.*:

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Secretary**