

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

PRESENT: Damon Bean, Jim Brett, John Burdick, Mary Ann Gunning, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd, Mark Russo; Alternates Bill Baxter, Robin Buzzi; Midge Langston (7:23 pm) and Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre.

ABSENT: Jack Casey, Lori LaMere, Alternate Midge Langston

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Joe Toro, Selectman Eric Claman, First Selectman Dan Jerram (7:10 pm)

Chairman Russo called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. He welcomed new member Damon Bean to his first meeting. Mr. Bean shared his background and experience in a variety of locations.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Mr. Baxter was seated for Mr. Casey. Ms. Buzzi was seated for Ms. LaMere.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

November 13, 2017 regular meeting

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

November 28, 2017 special meeting

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Ms. LaPlante, to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2017 regular meeting. *Unanimously approved.* Mr. Bean abstained.

3. REALIGNMENT OF VISION FOR EDC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES WITH LIMITED BUDGET

Chairman Russo mentioned that following the Special Meeting he asked all members to take a few minutes to share their thoughts on goals and projects for the Commission.

Mr. Burdick stated that he believes the primary issue is branding. Initially, the Commission needs to agree on what branding means and decide how much the Commission wants to do and what steps to take. Steps would include establishing a consensus on the brand with the Board of Selectmen and other shareholders and identity for the town and standardizing use of the logo. Additionally, he believes that

proactive municipal planning based on the presentation scheduled for January with Mike Goman would be helpful. He stressed that the work which has been completed on the Rails to Trails should be continued and he has picked up the mountain biking project that Dave Childs had previously been working on with Jeremy Schaller.

Mrs. LaPlante stated that she believes we need to do things very well and that the Rails to Trails project can be very significant for the town. She wondered if that Committee needs new members and should have regular monthly meetings to move the process forward. She also believes that this Commission needs to be an advocate for businesses in town. When a business is coming before one of the Land Use Commissions, members of the EDC should attend the hearing and speak in support of the businesses.

Mrs. Buzzi stated that she agrees with Mrs. LaPlante and would very much like to get involved in the Trails committee. She would like to see events entertained downtown to drive traffic to local businesses. As a thought, the Town could offer a trolley service for people to get around to the various businesses – Dattco could provide a bus on weekends. There is a lot available although not within walking distance and we should promote the businesses.

Mr. Bean noted that he agrees Rails to Trails is also a high priority and also the downtown initiative although he is not aware of what is currently going on. He loves Mrs. Buzzi's trolley idea. He questioned if the mountain biking trails are related to Rails to Trails. Rather than divert from the subject at hand, Mr. Brett will send Mr. Bean his presentation to review.

Mr. Baxter commented that we have lived in silos for a while without collaboration between the Boards and Commissions and that needs to change. Anything we do needs to be in sync with what the other Boards and Commission are doing. He believes we need to return to the idea of gathering the decision makers together to reach an agreement and collaborating on tasks to be completed. Chairman Russo noted that the January meeting will begin that process as all the Boards and Commissions will be invited.

Ms. Gunning noted that she agrees that Rails to Trails needs to be a priority although that was not one of her items. She mentioned that there was a meeting several years ago of many members of the Boards and Commissions where each Board and Commission shared what they were working on and the facilitator made a list of the priorities listed by attendees. In terms of signature events, she does not feel that our nice events are publicized to surrounding towns. She suggests that we focus on what events we currently have and how we can improve them and make them more appealing to a wider group of people. She also added that David Childs used to visit every new business that came to town to see what the EDC could do for them. She questioned whether someone doing that role needs to be on the Commission or could be appointed and report back to the Commission. Ms. Gunning elaborated that Ski Sundown does not receive enough attention for what they bring to town. She would like to see us have cluster groups come to our meeting to share what would help them or have someone from the Commission meet with them and report back. One of the cluster groups she would like to see represented is the artisans and craftspeople in

town. She thinks a retail area where craftspeople could exhibit and sell their products could be helpful. Ms. Gunning would like to see us collaborate with the town libraries as well. She would like to see an effort to offer lectures featuring professors from institutions outside the northwest corner.

Ms. Lloyd shared short and long term goals. Her number one is a commitment to the Multiuse Trail Initiative program and having that ready to submit when the funds become available. The remaining banners need to be hung and funds should be allocated to do so if the town cannot get them up. This Commission should partner with the business council and other local organizations. She would also like to see the Commission develop a plan for a marketing professional.

Mr. Brett believes we need to establish a plan for the Multiuse Trail. Any funding will be Federal and State monies to complete the build. This Commission has a pretty good shared understanding of what our town has to offer, he believes we need marketing assistance including outbound communication to customers/visitors and to businesses we would like to target to bring into town. Mr. Bean asked for clarification as to whether the marketing professional is a semi-permanent position as a consultant.

Ms. Langston shared the landscape tool she had used previously to track timelines for completing projects. She noted that this Commission does not have a clear Mission Statement. She suggests "The goal of the EDC is to serve as a catalyst to support existing business (expansion), develop new business and economic opportunities in New Hartford and provide information and incentives to site seekers and businesses of all types by partnering with: industry interest, commercial interest, retail interest and recreational interest". Ms. Langston also shared and discussed the critical success factors to accomplish the mission and goals.

Mr. Brett clarified that a similar discussion took place a year ago and one of the primary projects identified was the multi-use trail and he established a project plan where he tracked tasks and participants.

Chairman Russo noted that all the ideas discussed tonight still fall into the categories previously established. Ms. Lloyd noted that she believes any mission statement should also include residents because the focus cannot be solely on the businesses. Mr. Bean agreed and added that small homes and do it yourself are very big now.

Ms. Gunning noted that we have many outdoor activities which appeal to young people, but she would like to see more educational programs at libraries that might appeal to older people.

Chairman Russo summarized that the top initiative is the Rails to Trails followed by Branding/Marketing initiative, third would be the Planning/Downtown initiative and the fourth is Grand List Development or Promote Residential and Business Development.

Mr. Brett noted that these goals need to be presented to the Board of Selectmen with feedback given to align the EDC goals with the vision of the Board of Selectmen.

4. REVISIONS TO TOWN PAGE ON CT VISIT

Chairman Russo asked Secretary Ventre for an update on CT Visit. She noted that the State Department of Tourism created a page for New Hartford after their presentation. She requested an access password in order to correct errors that appeared on the page.

Once the New Hartford page is updated, Rosemary can return to provide a presentation to help businesses get set up. Target dates will be in late January or early February.

5. PREPARATIONS FOR JANUARY PRESENTATION BY MIKE GOMAN

Chairman Russo shared that John has been working with Mike Goman to have him make a presentation at our January 8th meeting. This individual has been working in Winsted, Canton/Collinsville and New Britain. His presentation provides an overview to help the Commission understand topics to be considered.

Ms. Gunning inquired if Business Council President Paul Amenta could be invited.

Chairman Russo will be drafting a letter to all Boards and Commissions inviting them to attend. Depending upon response will determine how many businesses can be invited.

6. CURRENT BUDGET BALANCE

Secretary Ventre passed out copies of the Budget Summary Report. At this point the budget may be \$8,000 but further cuts may be necessary. First Selectmen Jerram indicated that further cuts to funding had been made at the State level, but the Board of Selectmen would be willing to consider proposed expenditures with justification from this Commission.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Chairman Russo shared the letter that he sent to the Planning and Zoning Commission in support of the Brewery Legitimus expansion which will be addressed at the meeting on Wednesday.

First Selectman Jerram shared that Dave Hurley is being recognized for his development at an event in Winsted. He also shared that the new building has been framed on Route 44. The Mobil Station has been connected to the water and sewer and is now open. Ms. Lloyd inquired about the corner property. First Selectman Jerram shared that the lease runs through the end of 2018 at the existing site. The WPCA has compelled them to connect so they are working out the details to make the connection possible.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Burdick, to adjourn at 8:47 pm; *Unanimously approved.*:

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Secretary**