

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2014 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL – SESSIONS CONFERENCE ROOM**

PRESENT: Chairman David Childs, Bill Baxter, Jim Brett, David Krimmel, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd; Mark Russo, Alternate John Burdick, First Selectman Dan Jerram.

ABSENT: Bill Bohan, Bob Switzgable; Alternate Cindy Donaldson .

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Bob Moore, Polly Pobuda, Denton Butler

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Chairman David Childs called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM. Mr. Burdick was seated for Bill Bohan.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
November 17, 2014 special meeting.**

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd, to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2014 regular meeting; unanimously approved. Mr. Baxter abstained.

3. 2015 MEETING SCHEDULE

Chairman Childs presented the proposed meeting schedule for 2015 and inquired if there were any conflicts with the dates. Commission Clerk Ventre confirmed that she had checked with Christine Hayward and none of the dates were on the holiday schedule. Mrs. Lloyd commented that all the meetings would be on the second Monday of the month with the exception of October due to Columbus Day.

4. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Chairman Childs suggests that Planning and Zoning approve offsite directional signs for those businesses that are located off of the main routes such as farms. Secondly, he suggests that all the properties along Route 44 on the East side of town be rezoned to accommodate residential housing. Thirdly, he would like to see the town center zoning district expanded.

Ms. Lloyd suggests promoting expansion of the sewage treatment plan to enable high density development of residential property which could potentially attract younger residents and empty nesters and development of retail/commercial enterprises that would require a sewage treatment hook up rather than septic (restaurants, microbreweries, hospital urgent care, etc.). Secondly she suggests that the town provide incentives to attract new businesses to the community. This could include tax incentives for example. Mr. Butler clarified that the sewer expansion would need to be to the lines rather than the plant.

Mrs. LaPlante would like to see improved communication between the various boards and commissions so that the goals of the boards and commissions can be integrated toward a common outcome. For example, Open Space might seek funding to purchase additional property, but without bringing businesses in to town, there might not be funds available. Secondly, she would like to see additional ways to support home-based businesses. Mr. Burdick commented that there might be infrastructure needs that could be provided to assist these businesses beyond website advertising.

Mr. Baxter suggested that the update of the town plan be expedited. He does not see that much difference between the prior plan and the new plan. Secondly, he would like to see the town set 2 or 3 major projects for economic development and focus on those. It could be the downtown streets or moving the town garage. Whatever it is, funds should be dedicated to those projects in order to see a return on the investment. There are infrastructure needs that need to be addressed as an investment for the future rather than a reaction to a problem. He commented that Barkhamsted built a very nice garage for under two million dollars, meanwhile we have a garage sitting on some of the most desirable commercial property in the town.

First Selectman Jerram commented that there have been updates to the plan for the downtown area and he would like to see a meeting devoted entirely to the downtown center plan as a pathway to the future. At their Special Meeting tomorrow night, the Board of Selectmen will probably schedule a public meeting to present an outstanding powerpoint presentation on the downtown center plan. He has previously discussed plans for the downtown pavilion. He also passed around samples of the new design for the town letterhead and information on a recently scheduled Rails to Trails meeting on January 21st at 5:30 pm at the Barkhamsted garage.

Mr. Brett believes a priority should be to drive the design of the Rails to Trails project to connect to the Canton trail with economic benefits for the downtown area, increases to property values and health benefits. Secondly he would like to see a program to attract new businesses by offering incentives targeted to the type of businesses we would like to bring into the town in keeping with the plan.

Mr. Russo suggested changes to the zoning of the Route 44 corridor to allow residential housing and mixed use with median roof height being considered as part the changes. That should also include incentives for green building to support our goals of being a green town. Secondly, he would like to identify uses for town owned property that could generate revenue. He suggests solar panels on town property that could generate power or a small strip mall on Route 44 that could be a launch site for small businesses just starting out. Thirdly, he would like to see the town consider plans and development to increase tourism, such as a covered bridge on Carpenter Road. First Selectman Jerram indicated that the bridge project approved at referendum was for a 2 lane bridge and to change that design to a covered bridge would require approval from the voters.

Mr. Burdick's first priority would also be Rails to Trails. Secondly, he would like to see implementation of the downtown plan, not just talking about it. Thirdly, he believes we

should have incentive programs to attract specific types of businesses after identifying those most desirable.

Mr. Krimmel commented that he had reviewed the chapter of the old plan at length and many of the items suggested had been included in the prior plan. One item that had not yet been mentioned was the commercial zone on Route 202 and he believes that should remain in the Plan. Additionally, there were allowances for mixed-use on Tarringford East. He feels that Tarringford East should remain residential as any business development there will only contribute to Torrington rather than our town center area. Mr. Burdick inquired if the allowance for Tarringford East had been there to allow for industrial development. Mr. Krimmel clarified that the uses suggested would need sewer connection and our system is not located in that area.

There is a section in the plan regarding a commercial zone near the transfer station. He would like to see that removed from the Plan. He believes that support for home-based businesses should remain in the Plan. One of the other items that he believes should remain in the plan is promoting age specific housing.

Mr. Krimmel believes that the recommendation from the Commission should indicate which areas of the prior plan do not need to remain and outline those topics which should be added. For the benefit of this town, the various Boards and Commissions cannot continue to operate completely independently of each other. There should be quarterly meetings where multiple boards gather to exchange thoughts and ideas on how they can work together to accomplish goals for the town. He would like to see a marketing plan with the theme "A Town for All Seasons" that promotes the recreational assets of the town. The marketing plan should be designed to attract visitors who then may decide they'd like to live here. It should serve as a means to grow the population of the town while also increasing tourism.

Mr. Krimmel believes that the EDC needs members to volunteer to attend meetings of other Boards and Commissions in order to hear what they are planning in order to tie in to the economic development plans.

He commented that there had been a couple of suggestions this evening to offer incentives to attract businesses. The Historic District Commission will likely be seeking incentives as well because there are about 75 private residences in this town that are historic properties. Current regulations are not favorable to historic properties.

Mrs. LaPlante commented that she believes the suggestion to take the existing plan and delete the areas that are no longer relevant and add the new ideas is a good idea. She reviewed the minutes of the meeting where Open Space presented their requests to preserve farmland and believes that fits well with the current plans for the town.

Mr. Baxter agreed that Mr. Krimmel is on the right track, but he is reluctant to remove items from the plan because nothing has happened. He cited an example where a storage facility has been built in Burlington. That is something which could be developed near the transfer station property, so it might be short-sighted to remove the reference to that area or Tarringford East from the plan.

Mr. Brett summarized the topics suggested as cross team coordination, zoning modifications for mixed use, Rails to Trails, and an economic incentive package to draw in new businesses. The minutes will be provided to all members as soon as possible. Mr. Krimmel will then update Chapter 5 and have it sent to everyone for review.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS PROPER TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION.

Mrs. Pobuda mentioned that the Commission may not be aware that there are no rental properties available in New Hartford. There is no incentive to keep the young people in town at all. There is nothing here for them to start in. Young families don't start out in \$500,000 homes. She agrees that coordinating needs to be done, but inquired if anyone has met with the Business Council to solicit suggestions or to identify their needs.

Mr. Brett commented that one of his suggestions that he had not mentioned was to offer 15 minutes at each commission meeting to a local business to keep in touch with the needs of local businesses.

Mr. Moore indicated that if this Commission wants to see an incentive plan they need to develop a plan and take ownership of it to make it happen.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mrs. LaPlante, to adjourn at 8:13 PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Debbie Ventre
Commission Clerk**