

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2019 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: John Burdick, Mary Ann Gunning, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd, Polly Pobuda, Alternates Robin Buzzi and Meg Toro, and Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre

ABSENT: Damon Bean, Jim Brett, Jack Casey, Alternate Bill Baxter

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: David Rosengren (7:08 pm); Kathryn Boughton (7:14); First Selectman Dan Jerram (7:20 pm)

Assistant Town Clerk, Debbie Ventre gave new alternate member Meg Toro the oath of office.

Shelley Lloyd called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Ms. Buzzi was seated for Mr. Brett. Ms. Toro was seated for Mr. Casey.

2. ELECTION OF TEMPORARY CHAIR

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Pobuda, to nominate Donna LaPlante to serve as temporary chair. *Unanimously approved.*

3. WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Temporary Chair LaPlante welcomed newly appointed member Polly Pobuda and alternate member Meg Toro and offered for them to introduce themselves.

Ms. Pobuda shared that she is excited to be a member and hopes to bring new ideas to the group and that we can get some work done.

Ms. Toro shared that she grew up in Goshen and moved to town 15 years ago. She had served on the Board of Education for six years and is also excited to be involved with this group.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

November 5, 2018 Regular Meeting

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Burdick, to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2018 regular meeting. *Unanimously approved.* Ms. Buzzi, Ms. Pobuda and Ms. Toro abstained.

December 4, 2018 Special Meeting

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Ms. Gunning, to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2018 special meeting. *Unanimously approved.* Ms. Pobuda, Ms. Buzzi and Ms. Toro abstained.

5. DISCUSSION OF EDC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Temporary Chair LaPlante asked for comments on this topic. Mr. Burdick shared that based on the minutes from the Board of Selectmen's meeting and the newspaper article he believes the goals are those that we have been working toward as shown by the minutes of this Commission. He noted that an area which has stalled is communication with the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Ms. Lloyd noted that she had made similar comments at the Board of Selectmen's meeting that this group has been working toward those goals.

Ms. Gunning stated that if you read the goals of the EDC carefully it suggests that a main focus should be collaboration with other Boards and Commissions.

Mr. Burdick and Ms. Lloyd both indicated that this group had highlighted specific goals and narrowed the focus to a few umbrellas such as the multi-use trail, communication and coordination.

Ms. Pobuda noted that she observes that this group has worked well together and it sometimes seems that things take forever to get through the process.

Ms. Lloyd noted that having someone visit EDC is an open discussion whereas attending other Commissions such as the Land Use Boards have a much more restrictive forum since they are controlled by statute and ordinance. Mr. Burdick noted that we did have a joint meeting with the Board of Finance at the Goman and York presentation. Ms. Lloyd commented that turnout was poor for the CivicLift presentation due to bad timing in early December but that EDC had a strong turnout at the Connecticut Main Street Presentation, the Agribusiness Forum and CTVisit.

Mr. Jerram arrived at the point that the group was discussing the multi-use trail and clarified that the subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen working on that project consists of himself, Mr. Baxter and Mr. Brett.

Mr. Jerram noted that an effective strategy for EDC would be to review the use guidelines and suggest items that could be added or changed which would encourage economic development and make the town more attractive to potential developers or businesses. He noted that the EDC has goals and assignments under the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Burdick asked Ms. LaPlante if she felt there were areas of the Plan of Conservation and Development that EDC still needed to focus on. Temporary Chair LaPlante noted that the areas of the zoning regulations which are not always friendly to development may not be apparent until an application is before the Commission. Ms. LaPlante cited the recent experience at PNL Nutmeg with the parking discussion. Mr. Burdick asked how this Commission could address this issue. Mr. Jerram noted that Planning & Zoning did end up granting a permanent deferral of that requirement. Ms. Pobuda suggested that this Commission should look at all the regulations related to Commercial and Industrial development and recommend improvements to help Economic Development. Mr. Burdick suggested that perhaps this group could work with Planning & Zoning to develop a template to make the process easier for prospective businesses. Ms. Pobuda noted that is a negative approach that we should be emphasizing positive features. She suggested that maybe EDC could provide support to new businesses. Ms. LaPlante noted that new businesses approach the Land Use Officer when wanting to come into Town and although Mike is new he is being counseled by Rista who knows the Town very well. Mr. Burdick noted that he had received positive feedback from new businesses who had that experience with Mike and Rista. Ms. Lloyd commented that she felt that P&Z could be encouraged to be prudent in enforcing or waiving regulations that would encourage business growth.

Ms. Gunning commented that we really need rental housing in town. She noted that she listed her rental cottage and received 15 applications within the first week. If new businesses want to move into the Hurley Building, there is no temporary/rental housing available for their employees or even Mike the new Land Use Officer. Ms. Lloyd noted that she does not believe that the Zoning Regulations ban temporary style housing, but there would need to be an investor willing to build such a development. Ms. Pobuda noted that is the scenario where EDC could offer advice. Ms. Gunning noted that there are several properties for sale along route 44 which are advertised as Commercial. She questioned whether the property at the corner of 219 and 202 could be a possible location for multi-unit development. She also asked if Zoning could be invited to attend a meeting to clarify where some potential housing developments could be located. Ms. Lloyd noted that if we want to seek developers we need to do some marketing for that purpose. Ms. Pobuda noted that some of the barriers to development are the limitations placed by the current owners who may not want a development next to their home. Mr. Burdick noted that Route 44 is the area which could be developed for this purpose. Ms. LaPlante stated that EDC could approach Planning & Zoning to open a discussion about housing needs.

Mr. Burdick questioned whether this Commission is setting new objectives in this discussion. Mr. Jerram noted that it would be more appropriate to approach Planning & Zoning with specific modifications that EDC would support rather than asking for an open discussion of what they might approve on a potential parcel. Ms. Toro questioned whether any discussions had occurred with businesses who recently came to town to find out what regulations made the process more difficult. Ms. Lloyd noted that the survey will address that later on the agenda.

Ms. LaPlante will revisit her review of the Plan of Conservation and Development items assigned to EDC.

6. DISCUSSION OF CHAIRMANSHIP

Temporary Chair LaPlante suggested that until a permanent chair is elected that perhaps members could rotate the responsibility each month. Ms. Lloyd agreed to chair the April meeting.

7. WEBSITE PLATFORM UPGRADE UPDATE

Secretary Ventre loaded the new website on the monitor in the conference room. She shared the features that have been added in the new format including the business directory, events calendar and links between departments and boards/commissions. She also explained the difficulties in selecting images for the home page due to formatting restrictions.

Mr. Jerram commented that Ms. Ventre had worked countless hours to convert the prior website to the new format with positive results.

Secretary Ventre inquired if EDC would like to communicate the new business directory opportunity to local businesses. Mr. Burdick suggested that the Business Council could start the process with an eblast. He commended Secretary Ventre on the work that she had done on the new site.

Ms. Lloyd suggested that there could also be a communication to the Arts Council and other civic organizations. She suggests sharing a Facebook post about the business directory.

8. UPDATE RTT/MUT MEETING RESULTS AND MAPPING

In the absence of member Jim Brett, Temporary Chair LaPlante asked Mr. Jerram for an update. He noted that the mapping will not be updated until funding is in place. Although the grant has been approved, the funds have not been released and without knowing the conditions of the grant funds it does not make sense to proceed.

Ms. Lloyd noted that EDC could help with the outreach when that point is reached.

9. AGRIBUSINESS FORUM FOLLOW-UP / FARM DAY

Mrs. LaPlante shared that she had intended to contact our farmers to see who might be interested in doing a Farm Day. In terms of a date, she thought that the day before New Hartford Day would be an ideal choice. She has not had an opportunity to do that. She noted that Elaine from BrodieParkInc had shared that they were considering a Farm to Table event that could be the conclusion of the day.

Ms. Lloyd suggested that the larger farms in town should be involved in the early planning phase. Mr. Burdick asked how many farms were on her list. She believes there were about 25 farms on the list including orchards, farms, christmas tree farms, sugar houses and wineries.

10. BUSINESS SURVEY

Ms. Lloyd noted that she had pared down the survey. It was emailed to Secretary Ventre and former Chairman Russo back in July – but she has not received any feedback. Secretary Ventre will resend the survey file for discussion next month.

It remains to be determined if it will be done on the paid survey monkey or limit to 15 questions for the free version. The original target was to have it available August, September and October.

For the benefit of the new members, Ms. Lloyd summarized the progress on the survey and noted that feedback will need to be sent back to Secretary Ventre.

11. CURRENT BUDGET BALANCE – RECOMMENDATIONS TO SELECTMEN FOR REMAINING FISCAL YEAR

Secretary Ventre passed around copies of the proposed budget and expenditures report.

Secretary Ventre noted that Member Damon Bean had expressed an interest in attending the Conference on Tourism on May 8th and inquired if anyone else would like to attend. She noted that the Commission should vote to approve expending funds for this purpose.

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd, to allocate \$99 for Damon Bean to attend the Conference on Tourism. *Unanimously approved.*

Ms. Lloyd asked Mr. Jerram about whether the farm signs had come in and could be put up. She also asked if the ski banners could be swapped out in April for the Farm banners since locations seem to be limited. Ms. LaPlante had identified some potential locations for additional banners but does not know if those are still possible. Ms. LaPlante will email the highway superintendent about having the banners installed. Ms. Lloyd noted that Granby's signs seem to be more durable and perhaps someone should ask them for information about their source. She questioned if we should spend more money for a better quality or durable material. Ms. LaPlante noted that perhaps going forward there should be discussions with the highway superintendent about what should be ordered.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

No additional business.

13. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Pobuda, to adjourn at 8:42 pm; *Unanimously approved.*

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Ventre, Commission Secretary