

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2019 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Jack Casey, Mary Ann Gunning, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd, Polly Pobuda, Alternate Meg Toro, and Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre

ABSENT: Damon Bean, John Burdick, Alternates Bill Baxter and Robin Buzzi

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

Meeting Chair Shelley Lloyd called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Ms. Toro was seated for Mr. Burdick.

2. ELECTION OF TEMPORARY CHAIR FOR MAY 13 MEETING

MOTION Mr. Casey, second Ms. Toro, to nominate Mary Ann Gunning to serve as temporary chair for the May meeting. *Unanimously approved.*

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

March 11, 2019 Regular Meeting

MOTION Ms. LaPlante, second Ms. Pobuda, to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2019 regular meeting.

Ms. Pobuda noted that on page 3, Mr. Burdick had suggested a discussion of issues that new businesses faced when they came to town prior to her comment about focusing on the positive instead of the negatives.

Unanimously approved as amended. Mr. Casey abstained.

4. WEBSITE PLATFORM UPGRADE UPDATE

Ms. Lloyd asked Secretary Ventre to provide an update on the website upgrade. She shared the efforts that have been made since the last meeting to recruit businesses to submit listings to the business directory, including a business council email blast, emails directed at businesses who attended EDC events and a flyer mailed to farms and businesses currently on the website for whom we do not have email addresses.

Mr. Casey complimented the new format. Ms. Toro inquired about whether town ordinances are available on the website. Secretary Ventre noted that the ordinances are not currently formatted to be available on the web as the reference book consists of copies from old town meeting minutes. There is a project in process to clean up and retype those ordinances but it is very labor intensive.

Ms. Toro also inquired as to why there is not an email contact on the EDC page. Secretary Ventre explained that there is not a full time EDC employee to respond and therefore the emails are directed to the First Selectman's office. Ms. LaPlante will ask the First Selectman if an email could be directed to both his office and the Commission Secretary.

5. UPDATE RTT/MUT MEETING RESULTS AND MAPPING

An update on this project was not available due to the resignation of Member Jim Brett. Meeting Chair Lloyd asked Secretary Ventre to read Mr. Brett's resignation. Ms. Lloyd suggested that EDC send a letter thanking Jim and Mark for their service. She noted that she would very much like Jim's letter to include a reference reflecting our appreciation of his willingness to continue on the Trail Committee.

Ms. Lloyd indicated that this commission should encourage private citizens who take the initiative to support projects in town.

6. AGRIBUSINESS FORUM FOLLOW-UP / FARM DAY

Mrs. LaPlante shared that she had sent a letter to 45 farms to see who might be interested in doing a Farm Day and if the day before New Hartford Day would be appropriate. She has received some feedback from farms who would like to participate. Mrs. LaPlante has asked Christine Hayward to check into what additional insurance requirements might be needed for the farms to have the public on their property.

Mr. Casey inquired if all the booths at the Farmer's Market provide insurance certificates. Mrs. LaPlante is hoping to have different types of farms participate. Ideally having a farm to table either at lunch or dinner time on that day would be perfect.

Ms. Pobuda commented that since New Hartford Day started as a farm event, this ties in very well for that weekend. Mrs. LaPlante noted that she hopes to approach Anita Barden once her market is open downtown to see if she would be interested in the Farm to Table event. Ms. Gunning suggested speaking with the Conservation people who had previously done a Farm to Table event at Ski Sundown.

7. BUSINESS SURVEY

Ms. Lloyd shared that she has copies of some of the survey comments to share, but we cannot move forward this evening. She did mention that Ms. Toro had provided pricing for Survey Monkey. Ms. Lloyd had consulted with Cindy Donaldson on which option would be suitable. Cindy suggested that the \$25 per month membership would be suitable and it could always be upgraded down the line if needed.

Mr. Casey inquired if the intent is to send the survey via email to businesses who then respond and the results are tabulated. Ms. Lloyd indicated yes.

Ms. Lloyd commented that the Commission had previously discussed the opportunity to be anonymous but wanted the ability to reach out for additional feedback. Ms. Toro noted that it is possible to have an option at the end of the survey to provide contact information.

Ms. Gunning noted that she believes the various versions of this survey have been fine and asked Ms. Toro to summarize her comments. Ms. Toro noted that her comments related to limitations and format suggestions from survey monkey.

Ms. Lloyd summarized the history of this project starting with the university survey and scaling it down. Ms. Pobuda noted that she agrees with some of Ms. Toro's comments. Ms. Lloyd questioned who would take the responsibility to condense the items. Ms. Toro will condense and finalize the survey to be sent to Secretary Ventre who will send out to the Commission. Ms. Lloyd would like the final approval to be decided at the next meeting. Ms. Toro will identify how payment can be made and how many administrators can be on the account.

MOTION Ms. LaPlante, second Ms. Pobuda, to allocate \$300 for a year membership in Survey Monkey. *Unanimously approved.*

Ms. Pobuda shared that she has copies of results from another survey that was done by the Northwest Chamber which the Town belongs to. She noted that this survey targeted a much larger group and they only received a 7.9% response rate. She suggested that the Committee not be discouraged if they have a low response rate. She also provided an extra copy of the results for the First Selectman's Office.

Ms. Pobuda also noted that the newsletter lists a new photography business on Litchfield Turnpike and includes an email address. Ms. Lloyd asked if Ms. Pobuda would be willing to look into receiving the newsletter.

8. DISCUSSION OF FORUMS WE CAN HOST/INVITING OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Ms. Lloyd shared an idea to host another event at Brewery Legitimus to sign up businesses on the town website and ctvisit coordinated with the Business Council as we did before. Ms. Pobuda asked if the Republican American had done an article on the new website. Secretary Ventre noted that she had sent the information to Kathryn Boughton who indicated that she had already submitted an article about the new website. Mr. Casey expressed that he thought the event at the brewery would be a great idea. Ms. Lloyd mentioned if we could coordinate with a business after hours at the brewery it might be beneficial. Ms. LaPlante will reach out to the Business Council and Chris Sayer.

9. DISCUSSION OF EDC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Ms. Lloyd noted that the goals from December 2017 sent with the email would be considered the goals for this fiscal year.

She noted that the number one initiative of Rails to Trails has made good progress in keeping the momentum moving.

On branding and marketing, the new website is a big accomplishment in this area. Signs and banners were purchased and hung. Ms. LaPlante noted that the road crew member who was assigned to hanging the banners did meet with her to review what needed to be done. She noted that he was told that EDC would be willing to pay for bracket supplies if needed. Additionally, the 06057 decals were an accomplishment in this area. There was a plan to have magnets made and a similar promotion could be done. Ms. Pobuda noted that there might be a local vendor who could provide them at a better price. These initiatives could be continued.

The third item was the Downtown Initiative which did not see a lot of progress other than the library events. There are items related to this in the Plan of Conservation and Development which need to be addressed. Ms. LaPlante noted that this is an item where EDC should be bringing suggestions to Planning and Zoning of regulations that could be improved. Ms. LaPlante will speak with Mike Lucas about how best to approach this. A discussion continued about recent interpretations of regulations as they impacted different businesses. Ms. Pobuda noted that she had recently reviewed some of the regulations and felt that more commercial or mixed use zones might have enabled some businesses to remain open.

The fourth item was Promoting Businesses which Ms. Lloyd believes would relate to the survey. The forums we have hosted have mostly been well received with the exception of the December event promoting discoverlitchfieldhills.com.

Ms. Gunning noted that she would like to add the advertisement in the Journal Enquirer as an accomplishment under marketing. She also felt that the Triathlon was a continuing event. Mr. Casey noted that the Canoe/kayak race was a very successful event last year and it will be happening again this year.

Ms. Lloyd commented that this commission should consider what could be done to bring back the Farmer's Market and promote it. We need someone to organize it. Mr. Casey noted that moving it back to the Pine Meadow Green could be beneficial. Ms. Pobuda inquired about whether it could be held at the Waring Building in the parking lot. Ms. LaPlante noted that more important than someone to organize the market it is important that we have farmers who are willing to participate.

10. CURRENT BUDGET / DISCUSSION

Secretary Ventre noted that she does not have an updated budget report since the bookkeeper is on vacation.

11. DISCUSSION OF CHAIRMANSHIP

Tabled until more members are present.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Ms. Gunning will continue to liaison for the triathlon but expressed her disappointment that the Hartford Marathon Group is not going to sponsor it due to the poor attendance and shrinking enrollment. She noted that residents are not out to cheer on the participants. This year it will be on Saturday, July 13th sponsored by Wilson Endurance Sports LLC. It will still be called the Litchfield Hills Triathlon. Ms. Gunning will contact the sponsor to provide information about New Hartford and find out what we can do to support them. Ms. Gunning would like this Commission to consider how we could promote this event and what we could do for the participants.

Ms. Gunning noted that Anita Barden is opening her store and she suggests that when it opens we submit it to Channel 3 for their town by town piece to promote her market and the town. She would like the EDC to promote it.

Ms. Lloyd asked that this next comment be bolded in the minutes: She noted that members need to respond to the emails to confirm that we will have a quorum. When the Secretary sends the email with the agenda and requests a response, please respond. Additionally, Ms. Lloyd reminded members that reply all responses are not permitted under FOI. Ms. Toro noted that she believes that a response is not necessary if members are planning to attend. Ms. Lloyd asked that for the short term everyone respond with yes or no.

Ms. Lloyd commented that there are two full seats open on this commission. If an Alternate is interested in being a full member they can discuss with the First Selectman. If anyone has candidates for the openings, please ask them to contact the First Selectman.

13. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Ms. Toro, second Ms. Pobuda, to adjourn at 9:00 pm; *Unanimously approved.*

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Ventre, Commission Secretary