

**TOWN OF NEW HARTFORD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Monday, September 13, 2021
7:00PM**

PRESENT: Brian Watson, Polly Pobuda, John Burdick, Meg Toro, Jack Casey, Bill Baxter (arrived at 7:13 PM) Commission Secretary Madeleine Toro

ABSENT: Shelley Lloyd, Debbie Ventre

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: None

Chairman Brian Watson called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

1. CALL TO ORDER & SEATING OF ALTERNATES

Mr. Baxter was seated for Shelley Lloyd.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

There was no public comment on any agenda items.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 16, 2021 special meeting

MOTION MR Burdick, second Ms. Pobuda, to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2021 special meeting. *Unanimously approved.*

4. SCULPTURE WALK IDEA – John

Mr. Burdick informed the commission about David Skora, a man he knows who is a professor and an accomplished sculpture artist. Mr. Burdick believes it would be a good idea to fill empty areas downtown with sculptures, with the help of Mr. Skora. Mr. Burdick spoke with Judy McElhone of Five Points Gallery in Torrington about a possible collaboration with the gallery to help with the sculptures, and she was excited and willing to participate. Sculptors from all over the country can contribute their sculptures and receive a stipend of approximately \$500. If the sculptures sell, the town will get 10% of the sale proceeds. The sculptures would stay up temporarily, for about 6-12 months.

David Skora has supplied Mr. Burdick with examples of other towns across the country that have successfully done a sculpture walk. Websites containing pictures and information about these other exhibits, as well as David Skora's website, were distributed to the members via email. Ms. Pobuda suggested we invite Mr. Skora to come to an EDC meeting so he can give us more information and help us brainstorm ideas, and the commission agreed that this would be a good idea. Mr. Burdick offered to reach out to Mr. Skora to ask him if he would be interested in attending a future EDC meeting. Mr. Burdick also mentioned that this exhibit would be very unique, since there

are no other exhibits like it in the area.

5. NEW HARTFORD TOURISM - Map Update - Brian/John

Mr. Burdick shared that he has looked over the Berkshire Brochure material, which is the company that made the current map and could potentially make a new one for the town. He believes that this company isn't really offering what we want at the time and mentioned the high prices for businesses to put advertisements on the map. Mr. Watson agreed with this, and said he would be interested in hiring any business or person in town that could make the maps. He is in contact with a potential new EDC member that is also interested in making a new and improved map.

Mr. Burdick was told that the map could be digitized, but then we wouldn't get a hard copy. Mr. Casey mentioned a map he picked up at a gas station in town that included all the farms in town, and suggested we include the farms on the map as well. Greg, the other person that Mr. Watson found that could make the map, would allow us to easily change the map whenever we need to. According to Mr. Watson, this would be the better option since we would own the map and be able to add new businesses and QR codes to the map. Additionally, Greg could make the QR codes for each business if they don't already have one.

6. HOLIDAY EVENTS AND LIGHT NEW HARTFORD - Polly

Ms. Pobuda inquired about Halloween and whether or not the Halloween party is going to happen this year. The commission was unsure. Ms. Pobuda and the rest of the commission was also unsure about who is running Light New Hartford this year and whether it is put on by the Business Council or someone else. Mr. Burdick stated that as far as he knows, Carissa Monroe, owner of DBA Dance in New Hartford, is in charge of running the event. Since Light New Hartford is the Sunday after Small Business Saturday, Ms. Pobuda suggested the possibility that we tie in Light New Hartford with Small Business Saturday. She also suggested somebody approach Ms. Monroe and inquire about Light New Hartford and possibly ask if she would be willing to attend the October EDC meeting. Mr. Watson offered to reach out to her.

7. UPDATE ON TRAILS COMMITTEE - Bill

Mr. Baxter reported that the Trails Committee plans to approach the town selectmen and ask that the committee is given more responsibility. He believes that the town and selectmen have been distracted by the New Hartford House fire. He also stated that since the trail is controversial among people in town, it will be difficult to push through. Mr. Watson stated that most business people in the Hurley building that he has spoken to are in favor of the trail, since it will attract more people into town, and therefore attract more business.

8. IDEAS TO SUPPORT FIRE AID FROM NH HOUSE

Mr. Baxter stated that the rebuilding of the New Hartford House will be at a standstill until insurance issues are resolved, as well as the issuing of rebuilding a building that will be so costly and difficult to replicate. Mr. Casey mentioned that the ash on the side

of the remaining building next to the New Hartford House needs to be cleaned. Mr. Baxter stated that the building hasn't been deemed secure yet, and residents are not allowed to live there at the moment. According to Mr. Watson, since the foundation of the building was kept, any new buildings would be grandfathered-in in regards to zoning laws. Ms. Pobuda believes that even though the footprint of the building will be kept, it will still be hard to replicate the architectural detail from the original building. Mr. Baxter believes the town really needs to get a consultant to look at the property and see what can be done there.

Mr. Casey inquired about applying for a grant from Connecticut Economic Development Board to help us come up with a plan to revitalize downtown. Ms. Toro said that the town already has a downtown development plan that was done in 2015. Mr. Baxter also mentioned reaching out to legislators such as Larson and Witkos to help us get a grant to rebuild and revitalize downtown. Mr. Casey believes that whatever happens to the New Hartford House property will set the town for many decades going forward in the town, so it is very important that it is done well. On the other hand, Ms. Toro believes that while the rebuilding of the New Hartford House is important, we need to look beyond that and realize that the town has had issues since long before the fire that still need to be addressed.

9. BUDGET PLANNING

Mr. Watson had no new budget updates. Mr. Burdick suggested we spend any leftover money from the budget on new banners to go on the poles around town. Ms. Pobuda also suggested we put money into the maps, Light New Hartford, and the sculpture walk.

10. OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Mr. Burdick reminded the commission about the upcoming Northwest Connecticut Economic Summit at Five Point Gallery. He also shared an update about the Business Council's intern program, which is starting back up again. There are 3 businesses that are sponsoring interns.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

MOTION Mr. Watson, second Ms. Pobuda, to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 PM.
Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Madeleine Toro, Secretary
Economic Development Commission**

EDC Meeting Minutes - September 13, 2021