

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2020 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: John Burdick, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd, Polly Pobuda, Meg Toro, Brian Watson; Alternate Bill Baxter; Commission Secretary: Debbie Ventre

ABSENT: Jack Casey

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Jay Bailey (7:13 pm)

Secretary Ventre administered the oath of office to Shelley Lloyd and Donna LaPlante who had been reappointed to the Commission.

Chairman Meg Toro called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.
Mr. Baxter was seated for Jack Casey.

2. GUEST SPEAKER – Mike Lucas

Ms. Toro welcomed Zoning Enforcement Officer Mike Lucas. Commissioners had provided Mr. Lucas with a list of questions prior to the meeting:

1. What areas of study or possible grants for studies are on the horizon?

Mr. Lucas indicated that the study for the multi-use trail is underway and expressed that the economic opportunities created by the trail will be positive for the town. He added that this question has inspired him to look into more grant opportunities.

Additionally, he noted that an area that they are looking into is an adaptive use zone or regulations for existing structures such as the barn on Ramstein Rd. He believes that having flexibility in the regulations is becoming important to bring and keep people in town. The regulations related to the West Hill Overlay district that was established a few years ago have been reviewed because the initial ones were too restrictive. He feels that the new regulations will allow more growth in that area.

Mixed use regulations are coming to the forefront as he has met with individuals who are interested in bringing more housing to New Hartford.

4. What are the types of zoned uses for the current unbuilt parcels along Rte 44 and 202. Has there been any attention to reclassifying any of them. In particular Kerin & Kerin - 237 Main Street easement for 44 entrance and zoned use? Waring Property/PNL Nutmeg LLC parking increase and possible zoned use of vacant land on east side of parcel?

Route 44 is zoned almost entirely commercial whereas Route 202 is almost exclusively residential. As a result, there needs to be some creativity to accomplish the growth that the Town needs.

Mr. Lucas clarified that as long as mixed use is allowed in the Commercial Zone, it is possible to develop those areas. Mr. Baxter clarified that some individuals would not build a home in a commercial zone but would build in the mixed use zone.

3. What do you see as our biggest hindrance (zoning wise) to economic development?

The biggest hindrance is zoning itself. There is an inherent struggle between economic development and historic preservation (way of life preservation). He noted that a common perception is “not in my backyard”. But trends do support multi-use developments. Another hindrance is the ease of doing business. He cited Dean’s Stove & Spa as an example because he obtained approval but then did more than what had been approved. So, when he was asked for the site plans and such that should have been required initially he felt that we were making things difficult, when in fact those plans should have been approved initially. The flexibility that was allowed in this case resulted in a far better outcome.

Ms. Lloyd noted that she believes the store turned out well.

5. How much leeway is given by Planning and Zoning in their approval process before they suggest zoning board of appeals?

P & Z does not have the flexibility to waive regulations. ZBA has 3 responsibilities – expansion of non-conforming properties; variances (special permits for hardships on that particular piece of land); excess floor area ratio and appeal zoning officer decisions.

Mr. Lucas noted that when an individual comes in with an application it is the function of the zoning officer to identify which entity should address the application. Ms. Lloyd asked for clarification on whether an application that is sent to ZBA is then done or if they then need to apply to zoning and inland wetlands.

Mr. Lucas clarified that Inland Wetlands is a state function that must be addressed if there are wetlands on the property whether or not the application is then addressed by P& Z or ZBA.

Ms. Lloyd inquired if someone unfamiliar with the zoning regulations received guidance from him. Mr. Lucas clarified that he is the information hub between the applicants and the various commissions. An application before Planning & Zoning can only be approved with conditions or denied with or without prejudice. With prejudice means that it cannot be resubmitted without significant changes for at least six months.

2. How do you see EDC working together with you and the Commissions (PZC & IWC)?

Ms. Toro asked Mr. Lucas to address this question. He noted that a written letter of recommendation from EDC for applications coming before Planning & Zoning can be submitted to support their position. Ms. Pobuda questioned whether a letter from EDC gets put on record because public input is not permitted at P & Z meetings. Mr. Lucas noted that he can always add items to the agenda under other items if EDC has items that they would like to bring to P&Z.

Ms. Toro noted that some applicants might be coming to P&Z to try to identify what they can do.

Ms. Pobuda inquired about the timeframe of applications and how long before they are set for a hearing. Mr. Lucas clarified that when an application is received they have 35 days to set it down for a hearing. Then notices have to be published in the newspaper twice and all the 100 foot abutters need to be noticed. Within that 30 days, there may be revisions to the application in an effort to ensure the application is complete prior to the hearing. More complicated applications may require several months.

Ms. Toro asked Mr. Lucas to address the final question.

6. If it isn't regulated, is it not allowed?

Mr. Lucas noted that if one reviews our use categories they are certainly not all encompassing. He mentioned the axe throwing in Newington and noted that it is zoned indoor recreation. So just because a regulation isn't specific does not mean the activity is not allowed.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

November 18, 2019 Regular Meeting

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd, to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2019 regular meeting. Mr. Baxter & Mr. Watson abstained.
Unanimously approved.

4. BUSINESS SURVEY UPDATE

Ms. Lloyd inquired who was supposed to contact the business council to request that their membership complete the survey. Ms. Toro noted that we need to decide whether to send the survey out again as it is or pull it back and shorten the survey and try again. Only 9 responses have been received from the initial survey.

Ms. LaPlante will contact Peg Budny to ask that Business Council members be asked to respond to the survey.

Ms. Toro noted that she had received a request from Commission on Aging to utilize the survey monkey subscription that the EDC has purchased. It was discussed that the EDC email address is linked to the username and sending a Commission on Aging survey from that address might be confusing.

5. UPDATE FROM TRAILS COMMITTEE

Mr. Baxter announced that next month the trail project will become public. There are a couple of areas that will be expensive, specifically the gorge and the intersection. Trail will start at Callahan Park cross Rte 44 at the old railroad abutment and stay on that side of the road all the way down to Marandino's. The trail may need to be developed in 3 phases. Although the trail will not be next to the river, there will be river views. There is a communication plan to share this information. Ms. Lloyd asked that Mr. Baxter notify membership when the meetings are scheduled so that EDC can attend to support the project. Mr. Baxter noted that funding will also need to be established. Mr. Baxter commended Jim Brett and Bill Bohan, former EDC members who completed much of the initial work to bring this project to where it is today.

Mr. Baxter noted that he was reviewing the Capital Budget for next year and believes that this Commission should be encouraging the funding for the trail and the water system since this is the area most conducive to multi-use development. He also noted that the Town garage needs to be moved off the river and this Commission should be advocating for a new location or a feasibility study to move it. Ms. Lloyd commented that the Town garage is an eyesore in the area which should be the crown jewel of our riverfront area.

6. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

Ms. Toro mentioned the she had a request from the new Selectman Dave Rosengren who wanted to attend this meeting but had the conflict with the Board of Selectmen meeting. He wanted to know if anyone on the EDC could be a grant writer and suggested that grant money be pursued. Ms. Pobuda noted that we should pay a professional to do so. Mr. Rosengren would like directional signs placed at critical crossroads and he would also like to see an electric car charging station in Town. It was proposed that Ryan Bingham could be consulted to suggest a grant writer candidate.

Jay Bailey asked if he could make a comment. He wondered if EDC is doing anything to incentivize the Hurley property. He also noted that the Selectman's office has a clear plan for the Town garage. Mr. Rosengren would like to borrow funds to purchase land on Rte 44 for the garage and he is opposed to this plan. Funds have been spent on making the existing garage environmentally sound. He feels that if the Hurley

property were to get developed the existing property could be offered to the developer as an incentive. Mr. Burdick responded that he and the former chair of EDC met with two developers and the Hurleys in an effort to move something forward. Mr. Bailey noted his position is not to go into debt to move the garage and not to use prime commercial property.

Mr. Baxter and Mr. Bailey left at 8:23 pm.

7. CURRENT BUDGET / DISCUSSION

Secretary Ventre sent out the updated budget information prior to the meeting. Ms. Pobuda inquired whether funds need to be spent at this meeting. It was suggested that suggestions for using the remaining funds could be addressed at the next meeting.

Ms. Lloyd noted that she is in contact with the Triathlon organizers to figure out what we can do to help them. She has shared contact information for the Brewery to help organize food trucks.

Ms. LaPlante noted that she tried to contact Earl Phillips of the Grange to invite them to participate in Open Farm Day since they may have less involvement with New Hartford Day. She has not heard back from Earl, but heard a rumor that the Grange is considering selling their building. This Historical Society has scheduled their wine tasting for Friday evening. Ms. LaPlante noted, that if we have funds remaining in May, items could be purchased for Open Farm Day as had been done last year.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Ms. Ventre noted that a schedule of meetings for the Western Regional Tourism District had arrived. Mr. Pat Casey had volunteered to be the New Hartford representative, but he has resigned from EDC due to wintering in Florida. Would anyone else be interested? The schedule was passed around the table, but no members had the flexibility to be able to attend the meetings which are held at 10 am.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd to adjourn at 8:35 pm; *Unanimously approved.*

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Ventre, Commission Secretary