

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 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

Chairman Meg Toro called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.**

Mr. Baxter was seated for Jack Casey.

**2. GUEST SPEAKER – Laura Garay**

Ms. Toro welcomed Commission on Aging Chair, Laura Garay. Ms. Garay noted that Ms. Toro has been a big help to her on another project. The Commission on Aging was established by ordinance in 1983 which Ms. Garay passed around. She also noted that the Commission established by-laws which she also brought for members. New Hartford is unique in that our Commission focuses on the needs of residents age 50 and older.

Ms. Garay has served on the Commission for the past six years serving as Chair for the last two years. One of the initiatives during her tenure was the nutrition program where lunches were provided for Seniors for about three years. That program ended with the transition of Senior Directors and now they try to provide luncheons for special events. Additionally, they compiled the Senior Resource Directory which was delivered to every mailbox in 2015. Ms. Lloyd noted that she does not recall receiving it. The Commission is currently working on updating this resource. Mr. Burdick inquired if it is available online. Ms. Garay noted that it is not currently online but that could be considered for the update. She commented that they have about 100 people who still receive paper copies of the senior newsletter.

Ms. Garay noted that she traveled around to surrounding Senior Centers when she first was appointed to the Board. One of the services offered at that time that New Hartford did not have was a Senior Van. The Commission was instrumental in applying for grant funds to obtain a senior van. We now have a Senior Van which runs nearly every day in providing transportation for seniors both to special events and routine appointments. Another need that the Commission sees in New Hartford is Senior Housing. They have been trying to find a developer who would be interested in building senior housing in New Hartford. Local Support Initiatives Corporation is contracted with the State of Connecticut as a free resource for towns to help determine

needs for senior housing. Leslie from Local Support Initiatives Corporation suggested that a survey be sent out to town residents to assess the need for senior housing. Ms. Garay noted that this group already works with nearly all the surrounding towns. The key to working with an organization such as this is to help with locating property and applying for grants. Funds are not typically granted to towns – they need to have a not for profit such as a housing authority.

Ms. Garay noted that New Hartford has been fortunate in the Senior Director transitions because they have brought in new ideas for activities and developed interest in the Senior Center. Typically seniors attend activities at surrounding centers because they may like the food offered at one center or the entertainment at another. There have been some discussions about whether we should be offering activities for non-residents. Ms. LaPlante noted that she does not have the specific statistics, but we fund Brodie Park and many non-residents utilize that facility, so those discussions should be dismissed to be fair to “seniors”.

Mr. Baxter noted that New Hartford is lacking in smaller “starter” homes or elderly sized houses for people who want to down-size. Ms. Lloyd noted that while she does not wish to move to an apartment style home, she would be happy with a much smaller yard and she feels her children who are 30 something would also prefer to not have a lawn to mow or flowers to plant. Ms. Garay noted that non-age restricted housing may not qualify for certain grants.

Mr. Burdick inquired if this has been addressed with Planning & Zoning to ensure that they are supportive of this type of development. Ms. Garay indicated that she has had conversations with Ted Stoutenberg. Ms. LaPlante inquired who their survey will be sent to. Ms. Garay indicated that it will go out to all Senior Center members with email addresses on file. It will also be promoted on Facebook in the local groups. It is a housing needs survey for the town, not just Seniors.

Ms. Toro thanked Ms. Garay for her time. Ms. Pobuda commented that she knows a number of people who would like to come to New Hartford but there is nothing available. Ms. Lloyd noted that these housing developments need to be conveniently located to services.

### **3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

January 13, 2020 Regular Meeting

**MOTION** Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd, to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2020 regular meeting.

*Unanimously approved.*

### **4. BUSINESS SURVEY UPDATE**

Ms. Toro shared that they are speaking with the Business Council and will be sending out the survey again.

## **5. UPDATE FROM TRAILS COMMITTEE**

Mr. Baxter shared a document that he found in his files from June 2015 when Jim Brett and Bill Bohan started this process. Mr. Baxter talked membership through the proposed route of the trail including the ADA requirements for inclines. He encouraged all members to attend Thursday's meeting and help to generate support for the project.

## **6. OPEN FARM DAY – PRELIMINARY PLANNING**

Ms. LaPlante reported that she reached out to all farms to see who would be interested in participating this year on September 19<sup>th</sup>. We want to try to streamline the registration process while still accommodating the insurance requirements. Possibly having 2 central locations to issue passports so sign-in at each location would be simply listing a passport number and signing the sheet.

Ms. LaPlante noted that she heard that the New Hartford Day Committee has reached out to the Garden Club since the Grange will be closing. Ms. Lloyd commented that her daughter walked up to attend New Hartford Day last year and was disappointed to not see familiar faces that she expected to see. She did not like the music in the center felt it wasn't conducive and welcoming.

Ms. Lloyd commented that she feels we could possibly order an additional banner like the ones that were made last year. Ms. Toro suggested obtaining additional sponsors. Mr. Baxter inquired if the restaurants offered promotions.

## **7. SENATOR MURPHY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SURVEY**

Ms. Toro asked for feedback on the survey. Ms. Lloyd felt that it did not clearly ask what they were looking for. Ms. Pobuda felt that it was not directed toward rural communities.

## **8. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

Ms. Toro asked if anyone had anything to address. Ms. LaPlante mentioned that if EDC has any funds available in the Spring there might be a need to fund some plantings for the downtown island. The Business Council is going to install planters in front of the businesses.

Ms. Toro passed around the preliminary flyer for Hop Into Spring. Ms. Ventre shared that Anita Barden had suggested an alternative to Bunny Day. The Recreation Commission is not planning to have Bunny Day this year. Ms. Barden has contacted downtown businesses to donate candy to be included in eggs for an egg hunt around the downtown area. Businesses may also include coupons for discounts at their business to promote their business. She would like EDC to sponsor the event and

purchase plastic eggs. Additionally, since Ms. Barden received feedback on her successful Boo New Hartford event that additional businesses would like to participate, she would like EDC to send an invitation email to their business list offering the opportunity to participate in the Hop into Spring event.

**MOTION** Ms. Lloyd, second Mr. Baxter, to allocate up to \$200 to purchase plastic eggs for the Hop Intro Spring event.  
*Unanimously approved.*

Ms. Lloyd mentioned that she may have plastic eggs that could be donated for the event. Ms. Ventre noted that she had offered the same. Ms. Toro suggested that many others may have eggs that they could donate.

The State Tourism Conference will be coming up in April. Ms. Ventre sent out information to members. Ms. Toro suggested that Ms. Ventre could attend again if she is willing. Mr. Burdick inquired if more than one person could attend. EDC has funds to be able to cover the \$99 fee. Mr. Watson and Ms. Lloyd will check their schedules to see if they can attend. Members will vote on who should attend in March.

## **7. CURRENT BUDGET / DISCUSSION**

Secretary Ventre sent out the updated budget information prior to the meeting. Mr. Burdick commented that a budget proposal needs to be submitted to the Board of Selectmen for the upcoming fiscal year.

Mr. Baxter suggested an agenda item next month to finalize the budget proposal for next fiscal year.

A discussion continued about what giveaways could be ordered for Open Farm Day. \$100 had been budgeted this year for flashlights. Ms. Ventre noted that last year EDC spent approximately \$500 for 500 flashlights, but she is not certain if that price would apply for smaller quantities. Ms. Ventre will get pricing from Peg on flashlight order quantities. Ms. Pobuda suggested that she always appreciates jar openers as she finds them useful. She suggested that giving those away with the website printed on would keep the website visible to people.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

Mr. Bailey asked to share some ideas for Economic Development. He has noticed from attending meetings of various boards that this Commission could be more effective if each member attended other board meetings in order to be more connected to the other Boards. Mr. Rosengren has suggested having studies done that Mr. Bailey believes could be helpful to the EDC. However, Mr. Bailey also feels some of the topics of these proposed studies could be dated quickly and lawyers do not need to be hired to complete them. There are qualified residents in town who could help with these projects. Mr. Bailey noted that the Board of Selectmen budget

for signage could be used to pretty up the downtown area. Ms. Lloyd suggested that those funds are probably for street signs. Mr. Bailey suggests that Mr. Jerram would be supportive of spending funds on directional signs. He believes that EDC should work more closely with Zoning to ensure that initiatives can be passed. Farmington Valley Health has more control of our development than we realize. Mr. Rosengren wants to move the town garage to commercial space on Rte 44 which really should be kept on the tax rolls. The Hurley property could help to accommodate the senior housing in a mixed use residential development. He suggests that housing on Main Street be zoned to allow offices within the residential area. Mr. Burdick noted that they already are. Ms. Pobuda inquired if Mr. Bailey has attended any Zoning meetings. Mr. Bailey noted that he is attending the next one. Ms. Pobuda commented that we have not been permitted to comment at those meetings. Ms. Lloyd noted that public comment is only permitted at public hearings on those specific topics. EDC has asked to present to Planning & Zoning on specific topics and not been permitted to do so. Mr. Bailey suggests that there should be more leniency in zoning regulations that are not restricted by statute.

**10. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION** Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd to adjourn at 8:30 pm; *Unanimously approved.*

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Debbie Ventre, Commission Secretary**