

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2017 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: John Burdick, Mary Ann Gunning, Donna LaPlante, Mark Russo; Jim Brett; Lori LaMere; and Shelly Lloyd. Alternates Bill Baxter, Robin Buzzi and Midge Langston; and Laurie Boyan Acting Commission Secretary

ABSENT: Damon Bean, Jack Casey and Commission Secretary Debbie Ventre.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Alesia Kennerson, Laura Garay, 7:45pm Reporter

Chairman Russo called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mark Russo called the meeting to order

2. REVIEW BUDGET POWERPOINT PRESENTED TO BOARD OF FINANCE IN MARCH 2017 IN CONJUNCTION WITH QUESTIONS, ANSWERS, AND COMMENTS

Chairman Russo presented the 2017 Budget to new members. Chairman Russo also discussed why he called the meeting. He wanted to discuss where the board has been and where they need to go. He assigned homework to board members. Asked board members to prepare a 5 to 7 minute presentation on the top 3 objectives and planned discuss them at the next meeting to decide what they should bring to the BOS for approval.

Shelly Lloyd asked what the proposed budget was and Chairman Russo responded \$8,000 with potential cuts expected. They further discussed public and private agreements to secure funding in a partnership but that would have to go through legal first.

Chairman Russo presented the Subcommittees as Rails to Trails, Grand List Development, Marketing/Branding and Downtown Initiative. Discussions included Bill Baxter stating two reports, one done by the EDC and the other by a study group, were presented to the BOS and they have done nothing with them. He wants the results to be shared with the town. He pointed out that Winsted and Torrington both received 1 million dollars to expand Rail to Trails in their towns. Our project is stalled.

The group discussed Rail to Trails and decided it is the most important objective.

Chairman Russo shifted the meeting to discuss the Grand List, Marketing and Downtown initiatives. They discussed the need to make decisions on a marketing logo. Shelly Lloyd stated that they have all the requirements they need to do it but agreed that \$2,000 is not enough to complete it.

Chairman Russo presented the EDC Vision. The group discussed attending P&Z meetings and the possibility of getting one person on a rotating schedule to attend the meetings. This was tabled for discussion at the next meeting. They also discussed getting involved in other commissions.

Chairman Russo spoke with Rosemary of VisitCT about adding a few dates with businesses and towns to see how we can work together.

MaryAnn Gunning shared how she felt the EDC should meet with cluster groups. All cluster groups in town are in the form of an artist or artisans. If EDC meets with these groups they can see what their needs are. This will help promote EDC and help cluster groups at same time. This was tabled for next meeting.

Chairman Russo moved onto the EDC Vision related to the Plan of Conservation and Development slide and Current EDC Challenges. There is a lack of collaboration among town commissions, spotty interactions with the Business Council and a problem with meeting attendance. The EDC is not empowered to make independent decisions and decide funding issues.

Hiking trail signage was discussed. Eight signs were put up and all eight blew down. Six have not been put up as of yet and another 7 have not been received. The six are currently in Dan's office. They discussed the issues with structure and working on better installation. People did notice the signs and liked them.

Alesia Kennerson discussed the need to let the BOS know where the EDC wants the remaining signage and Shelly Lloyd indicated that she drove the town with Dan Jerram and personally showed him where the signs need to go.

Chairman Russo presented what the EDC still needs to tackle: website, trademark and marketing collateral pieces.

Chairman Russo discussed the industrial properties in New Hartford. Hurley is a 12.1 acre lot through zoning with a lot of approved units coming in the future. The EDC reached out to TWB Properties, LLC – Greenwoods Industrial Park and has yet to receive a response.

Jim Brett discussed Rails to Trails and the urgent need to finalize a trail. Everything is dependent upon the defined route and the need to obtain funding/grants. We cannot do anything unless we have a route and funding in place. Until we have an agreement the project is dead in the water. Shelly Lloyd asked why is everyone else getting money and not us? Alecia Kennerson asked what we need from the BOS? Mr. Brett stated we need to establish a path. He provided this information (3 paths) to the BOS. Other towns accomplished and faced similar hurdles with volunteers. Why can't we? BOS is not on same page as EDC.

Laura Garay added that the Rails to Trails committee needs forethought. This is a large project with a big price tag. Collaboration with other towns is not happening. There is an investment on behalf of this town and the town needs to know this.

Ms. Lloyd further added that we need to pick up the pieces and the project has the potential to be reenergized if support is given.

John Burdick added that the committee has worked so hard and the wind is getting knocked out of their sails.

Chairman Mark Russo presented the 2018 Budget as presented to the BOS and BOF. \$3,695 is the reoccurring which makes up 53% of the budget. EDC asked for \$18,000.

Chairman Russo reminded everyone to come to the next meeting with the top 3 most important objectives as if we had a “real budget” and provide him with a vision. We need to make New Hartford a destination place. We need to get the ball rolling. We need to get others on board to continue to exist. Bill Baxter added that we need to change the mindset from ‘can’t do’ to ‘can do’. Winsted, as an example, was in receivership from debt, with no capital fund and now they have a large capital fund and are out of receivership. Why them and not us? We need more forward thinking.

Jim added 95% of our community is what people put into it. Alignment with leadership is important.

Laura encouraged the EDC to be very specific with its options.

Donna LaPlante adds that we need to be prepared for opportunity. We are not prepared to make the next step. If given a windfall we need to find an agreement. If we want a marketing person who develops branding that we can agree with, others need to agree we are going to have a branding logo.

Shelly Lloyd added that other towns use their brand on every page that comes from that town. It is a starting point “branding”. The same one everywhere. Font, colors and message are all the same. Mark Russo further added that Coca Cola no matter what language it is written in you know it is Coca Cola. You want to be enticed, drawn in by the marketing to get them to come.

Donna LaPlante asked Alesia Kennerson to get meetings back on track with the BOS.

Jim Brett added that if there is no energy for Rails to Trails let’s do something else. Kill it and move on.

Donna Laplante reminded everyone about the Town Garage project. The committee worked hard to make their presentation and nothing has been done with it to date. Mrs. LaPlante said to document the project well so at a later date the board can retrieve the reports, quickly update them and complete the project down the road.

John Burdick added how Rails to Trials changed a town in Vermont from a ski town to a biking town. The same has happened in Canada.

3. FORMULATE CONCEPTUAL PLANS BASED ON NEW BUDGET

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4. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Chairman Mark Russo, seconded by Ms. Shelley Lloyd, to adjourn at 8:34 pm; *Unanimously approved.:*

Respectfully submitted,

**Laurie Boyan
Substitute Commission Secretary**