

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2014 – 7:00PM
ANN ANTOLINI SCHOOL – CONFERENCE ROOM – 30 ANTOLINI ROAD**

PRESENT: Chairman David Childs, Bill Bohan, David Krimmel, Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd; Alternates John Burdick and Lynn Charest.
ABSENT: Bill Baxter, Jim Brett, Mark Russo, Bob Switzgable; Alternate Cindy Donaldson.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Chairman David Childs called the meeting to order at 7:08PM. All regular members were present and seated for the meeting. Mr. Childs welcomed new alternate member John Burdick.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. December 9, 2013 regular meeting.

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Ms. LaPlante, to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2013 regular meeting; unanimously approved.

3. DISCUSSION OF CHANGES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PAGES OF WEBSITE WITH DAVID KRIMMEL, BETH PAUL, AND DEBBIE VENTRE.

The Commission reviewed with Town Hall staff Beth Paul and Debbie Ventre the changes made to date on the Economic Development page of the website, particularly in the "Visitors" area. Mr. Krimmel noted that a calendar of events was still needed in this area of the website, and he distributed a sample listing of annual events grouped by seasons under the heading "A Town for All Seasons". Ms. Lloyd questioned whether this chart could include hyperlinks to the pages for these activities, and Ms. Paul responded affirmatively. The Commission discussed and agreed that information for visitors should not be put on the main calendar, where such things as Town meetings are also listed; visitor and resident information should be kept separate. Ms. Paul then explained that the calendar could also be linked to the "How Do I" page under the heading of "Find Events in New Hartford?" Ms. Lloyd questioned whether a second full calendar was possible on the website, and Ms. Ventre stated it was not; she said that she had spoken with Virtual Town Hall and was told that they could only link to an external calendar at this point.

Ms. Lloyd then suggested an additional hyperlink whereby visitors to the site could click on a link stating "Click here to see what is happening this month in New Hartford." Ms. Ventre explained that there was a Special Events page on the website; however, they had had difficulty getting information from various town organizations regarding events to post. She noted that Christine Hayward, the Selectmen's Administrative Assistant, maintained the front page of the website. Ms. Hayward was also unsuccessful getting information from Town organizations. Ms. Ventre stated that they do post whatever they are aware is currently going on in town. The Commission agreed to go ahead and post the "Events for All Seasons" information that Mr. Krimmel developed.

Mr. Krimmel then noted that the events listed in the "Leisure Activities" heading needed to be expanded. Mr. Bohan questioned whether the Commission should run another notice in the newspaper or Town newsletter about what the EDC was trying to do. Both Ms. Ventre and Ms. Lloyd noted that no one responded the last time they had posted this announcement. Mr. Burdick suggested linking the Town's page to tourist webpages for the area, such as those for Litchfield County. He suggested that the EDC also ask them to put a link to New Hartford directly on their pages. Ms. Paul and Ms. Ventre said that they would be willing to do this if they were given a list of organizations to contact.

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Mr. Krimmel then expressed the opinion that the Town should make increased use of Brodie Park as an asset for attracting visitors to the Town. He suggested running cross-country skiing, skating, ice fishing, etc. at Brodie Park, and the Town could rent equipment there to do so.

The Commission then discussed the front page of the EDC section of the website. Members agreed that the "Businesses" section of the website would be the next area to be addressed. Commission members discussed the need for a better introductory paragraph regarding why new businesses should come to New Hartford. Ms. Lloyd noted that she had written and distributed a possible summary paragraph for this page. A member of the audience, Meg Toro, then used her iPad to show Commission members the website for the Town of Canton, expressing the opinion that it was easier to navigate with few clicks needed to get to information; there were also more pictures. Ms. Lloyd and Ms. Paul explained that a similar effect could be achieved on the Town's website by using the menu at the top of the main page. The challenge of obtaining information from Town organizations regarding events was again discussed. Mr. Krimmel suggested creating a list of the chairpeople of all Town organizations and writing a letter directly to each one requesting their cooperation. Ms. Lloyd stated that she could speak with the Chairperson of New Hartford Day regarding her list of contacts.

Ms. Lloyd then asked Ms. Paul whether it was possible to do a slideshow of pictures on the main page. Ms. Paul stated it was not possible on the front page; however, it could be done on other pages. She suggested that the picture on the front page could be changed manually on a seasonal basis; however, that had to be done by the programmer, not by Town staff. Mr. Bohan asked if the slideshow would be possible on the Calendar of Events page the Commission just discussed, and Ms. Paul responded affirmatively.

The Board thanked Ms. Paul and Ms. Ventre for attending the meeting and assisting with this project.

4. FORMATION OF SUBCOMMITTEES AS PER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF GLENN CHALDER, AICP AT THE DECEMBER 9, 2013 EDC MEETING.

Mr. Childs reminded Commission members that he had distributed Glenn Chalder's summary of the December 9th meeting via email. He suggested that members of the Commission choose which area they preferred to focus on. Subcommittees would then be formed that would report back to the entire Commission on a monthly basis.

1. Support Existing Businesses - Mr. Krimmel.
2. Expand the Local Economy – Ms. Lloyd, Mr. Burdick, Mr. Bohan, and Mr. Brett.
3. Enhance New Hartford's Character and Quality of Life – Ms. LaPlante and Ms. Charest.

Mr. Childs said that he would speak with those members not present tonight in order to find out what subcommittee they wished to join. Mr. Bohan suggested that each individual member come back to the next EDC meeting with their goals for the upcoming year, and that those that receive the most votes should get the attention of the entire commission.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS PROPER TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

A. Update of Reinstatement of the New Hartford Farmer's Market:

Mr. Childs stated that he had spoken with Lisa Auclair, Manager of the Norfolk Farmer's Market. She had been considering helping New Hartford restart the farmer's market here; however, she ultimately declined the offer. The Commission would therefore have to find a new person to manage the effort.

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A member of the audience, Tom Goddu, then addressed the Commission to explain that he had worked with the Farmer's Market and the New Hartford Business Council. He stated that there had been obstacles to the continued success of the farmer's market, including the need for a larger venue and good circulation for traffic. Mr. Goddu stated that he had spoken with some area farmers who said that they prefer to go to bigger markets so as to get more bang for their buck. He explained that, in his opinion, it would be ideal to somehow run the farmer's market at Brown's Corners on Saturday mornings while sports were also going on; a potential audience was already onsite.

Ms. Lloyd stated that she believed more effort needed to be made to advertise the markets. She noted that the markets had been held during the July Brodie Park concerts; however, no one on her street was aware of the fact and she lived near Brodie Park. Mr. Burdick noted that Coventry, CT was a very small town; however, it had one of the largest farmers markets in the State. He expressed the belief that the Town had to make an effort to attract visitors from outside New Hartford. Mr. Goddu suggested that perhaps the field across the street from The Home Depot would be a good location for a market. He offered to speak with some contacts with people who ran other farmers markets in the State.

Mr. Krimmel questioned whether New Hartford farmers even wanted to have a market here in New Hartford. He suggested the Commission make an effort to speak with local farmers and find out if this was something they wanted to see reinstated. Mr. Burdick noted that a farmers market was not just beneficial to area farmers, but also as a way to attract tourists to the Town. Ms. LaPlante noted that craftspeople were important to have at these types of events as well, as certain produce was only available seasonally.

The Commission agreed to table this discussion for the time being.

B. Gas Station Property at the Corner of Route 44 and Route 219.

Mr. Childs informed the Commission that an offer had been made to the property owner and a response had been expected the previous week; however, there had been no answer to date. The site was being evaluated regarding potential environmental concerns.

C. New Hartford History Trail.

Tom Goddu addressed the Commission regarding a project he was currently working on to develop a History Trail in New Hartford. He explained that each location would have a code plaque that could be scanned to allow visitors to read about the site and see historical pictures of the area. Mr. Krimmel questioned whether the Historical Commission was involved in the project, and Mr. Goddu responded affirmatively. He stated that the technology would potentially allow them to collect information regarding how many people visit each spot, and they could also offer coupons redeemable at local businesses to the visitors.

Mr. Goddu stated that the project was still in the very early stage; however, he was attempting to line up grant money for further work. Mr. Childs explained that the EDC could potentially offer some financial assistance if Mr. Goddu put together some written information regarding the project and what additional resources were needed to advance it.

D. Focus New Hartford.

Meg Toro addressed the Commission to let them know that she and her husband had created Focus New Hartford as a group to represent local residents at all Town boards and commissions.

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E. Property Tax Reward Program.

Mr. Bohan stated he was mentioning this on behalf of Mr. Brett. The program was an incentive to encourage residents to shop at local stores. Each resident could obtain a reward card, and if they spent a certain amount of money at local stores, they could obtain a rebate on their property taxes. The website for the program is www.propertytaxcard.com.

F. Pine Meadow Flood Insurance Program.

Mr. Goddu again addressed the Commission to advise them that due to new federal standards, approximately 180 households in Pine Meadow were going to be subject to significantly higher flood insurance rates when the properties transferred ownership. He explained that between this new flood insurance program and the high sewer rates, the area was in danger of becoming blighted. Mr. Goddu noted that the federal government has not performed an update to flood maps of the area since 1982, so decisions were being based on information that was very old and potentially out of date.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Mr. Childs, second Mr. Burdick, to adjourn at 8:46PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Stacey M. Sefcik
Commission Clerk**