

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 10, 2021 – 7:00PM
VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM**

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

ABSENT: Jack Casey, Meg Toro.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman, Laura Garay, Greg O'Brien, Paul Amenta (joined 7:10pm)

Chairman Brian Watson called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES.

Mr. Baxter was seated for Mr. Casey.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

MOTION Ms. Lloyd, Second John Burdick to move Item 11 Other Business up to allow Greg O'Brien to speak while waiting for Paul Amenta to join the meeting. *Unanimously approved*

Mr. O'Brien shared that he serves on the Recreation Commission and the Trails Committee as well as the Chairman of the RTC. He noted that the recent fundraising letter sent provided for feedback and they received several comments that there was not much information available about the town for new residents. He suggests creating and producing an ultra HD video to promote the town and encourage people to move here, work here or start a business here. He listed a litany of town assets and events that could be included. Mr. O'Brien indicated he will donate his services to write the script and record the audio for the video. He has a colleague who has offered to work on the video with him at a reduced cost.

Mr. Baxter stated that he believes it is a great idea although he questions how all that was described could fit into 5 minutes. Ms. Lloyd questioned what the reduced rate would be. She wondered if we are looking at \$1,000 or \$5,000. Ms. Lloyd expressed that she would like to see a collaboration with the Board of Selectmen like the DINE New Hartford promotion just completed. Mr. O'Brien speculated that the cost would likely not exceed \$3,000. Ms. Pobuda questioned where the video would reside. Mr. O'Brien indicated that there would be a link from the town website. Ms. Pobuda questioned if there would be a way to update the video in the future. Mr. O'Brien indicated that absolutely the video could be updated or a subsequent video could be created to announce the trail. Mr. Burdick commented that can't you edit the video itself to add scenes etc. Mr. Baxter noted that the concept is terrific but that details need to be elaborated and the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance need to be on board. Chairman Watson confirmed that he believes the video could be helpful but needs to be a collaborative effort.

3. NEW HARTFORD BUSINESS COUNCIL INTERN PROGRAM

Chairman Watson welcomed Paul Amenta, President of the New Hartford Business Council. Mr. Amenta mentioned that the upcoming school year will be the ninth year for the intern program. In the past, students would be recruited in the fall semester and they would try to line them up with businesses. They had a fall and spring program. For the upcoming year, they would like to gather a list of businesses interested in taking on a student intern for a non-working, non-paying program. The student is exposed to all facets of operation of the business. Students will be aligned with a business in the fall but have the flexibility to participate in the fall or winter depending upon their participation in sports programs. He currently has 3 businesses signed up, an accounting firm, Grey Area Tavern and WZBG. If members have a business who is interested or know someone who would be interested they can reach out to Paul at paul.amenta@gmail.com.

4. SUPPORT FOR BEEKLEY LIBRARY STORYWALK

Mr. Burdick asked how many members had seen the current Storywalk. The library had previously done one for Thanksgiving and another for Christmas which were very well received. The frames are approximately \$250 and then the book must be purchased and cut apart and printed at an approximate cost of \$120 per book. He would like to see the EDC allocate \$500 to fund the background frames and two books.

Ms. Lloyd commented that there was some confusion over the \$247.50 charges from last fall that was supposed to be charged to Recreation. Mr. Jerram commented that he believes the library has been funded with \$240,000 by the town.

Ms. Lloyd believes that the Storywalk is a positive event that draws foot traffic to downtown and she supports funding \$400 to fund 2 storywalks. Ms. LaPlante said she would support the amount that Shelley had suggested. Mr. Burdick clarified that he was asking for \$500 to cover the backgrounds and two additional storywalks. Ms. Lloyd asked for clarification of whether the \$247.50 would be reimbursed to the EDC account. Mr. Jerram questioned whether the second storywalk would be posted before the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Pobuda asked if this was presented to BookFriends for support. Mr. Burdick indicated he was unsure if it had. Mr. Jerram indicated that this needs to be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Baxter noted that he understands Mr. Jerram's perspective and suggests that the library board review their budget to minimize future requests. Ms. LaPlante noted that it is important to recognize that this idea originated with Lee Tangarone and should not be diminished by discussions over the cost.

MOTION Ms. LaPlante, second Ms. Lloyd, to allocate \$250 toward the current storywalk.

Motion passed 5 in favor and 1 opposed.

5. LITCHFIELD HILLS TRIATHLON – Shelley

Ms. Lloyd noted that the BSA girls troop will be manning some water stations but she has not heard from the Boy Scouts. Torrington Savings Bank has committed to sponsor and Turning Point Realty might be. She requested that another email be sent to the businesses asking for their support as sponsorship – a friendly reminder?

The next step would be to recruit gift certificates for prizes from businesses and that needs to be done in the next couple of weeks. She asked for support from other members to help solicit donations. When no one volunteered, Ms. Lloyd asked Ms. Pobuda if she felt that they could split the businesses. Ms. Pobuda indicated that she is not able to do so with her other commitments. Ms. Ventre noted that the last drawing for Smoke King was not conducted and they have agreed that it could be used as a prize.

Ms. Pobuda asked about food for the triathlon. Ms. Lloyd indicated that she had checked at FoodTown for the grab and go items suggested and planned to speak with Mike about possible cost savings. Mr. Burdick commented that it is important to have Town information either via labels or some other way on the food that is provided.

6. DINE NEW HARTFORD – WRAP-UP

Ms. Lloyd commented that it was a very positive event and we received wonderful feedback from the participating businesses. She noted that many businesses have kept their signs out and there are posters available. Ms. Lloyd thanked Ms. Ventre for all the work that she put in to make it happen and thanked Ms. Pobuda for all her help in visiting businesses. Ms. Pobuda expressed that she would like to see this event done again in the future as it was such a positive event.

Ms. Ventre shared that approximately half of the winners each week were from New Hartford and the other winners were from out of town. Some came from as far as Waterbury or West Hartford and will be returning to redeem their prizes.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

March 15, 2021 Special Meeting

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Lloyd, to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2021 special meeting.

Unanimously approved. Ms. Pobuda and Mr. Baxter abstained.

8. UPDATE FROM TRAILS COMMITTEE

Mr. Baxter commented that there has been a long phase without meeting but as soon as in person meetings are possible they will be meeting again to get the project on track. The funding piece will now need to be mobilized as well as publicity. He noted that the Trail is passive recreation with minimal impact to the environment but he believes it will have a very positive economic impact.

9. PRELIMINARY PLANNING FOR OPEN FARM DAY – Donna/Shelley

Ms. LaPlante commented that the planning for Open Farm Day in 2019 was started in February, giving 6 months of prep time. If we start to plan now for September we're looking at only 3 months to prepare. A lot of the templates will be the same and initial thought process is not going to change. The farms need to be contacted to identify who wants to participate and can commit. Passports had to be prepared and printed by mid-August. She had contacted the farms in February 2020 and Barden Farm and Lindell Flower Farm had committed. She cannot commit to any more than offering advice due to her husband's upcoming surgery and immunotherapy. Perhaps someone could reach out to the farms by email. Initial inquiry should identify who will participate and who needs a porta-potty as Russ donated those in exchange for sponsorship and would need reservations early to ensure they have them available.

Ms. Lloyd commented that now we are bridging 2 budget years. Last time we were able to use some of the prior fiscal year's funds to purchase some of the supplies but then used a large amount of our annual budget for this event. Ms. Pobuda asked whether a date has been established. Ms. Lloyd commented that last time we selected a Saturday to coincide with New Hartford Day. Mr. Jerram indicated that there had been discussions of having a music event with Food Trucks and concerts on Saturday afternoon/evening. Ms. Lloyd expressed that Open Farm Day happens more in the morning and ends around 4 pm. Ms. LaPlante noted that it may be difficult for families with small children to visit all the farms.

Mr. Watson questioned whether Open Farm Day should be moved to Sunday if New Hartford Day is moved to Saturday. Ms. Lloyd expressed that she would like to see it all together. Ms. Pobuda believes that it should be a different day.

Mr. Watson agreed to email the farms after the Board of Selectmen establishes the date for New Hartford Day. Ms. Ventre shared that EDC had received a nice Thank you note from Peggy's Personalized Promos with a \$25 gift certificate toward a future purchase.

Ms. Lloyd expressed that she would like to establish Open Farm Day on the opposite day of the weekend so if New Hartford Day will be Saturday then Open Farm Day will be Sunday. If New Hartford Day will be Sunday, then Open Farm Day will be Saturday.

10. BUDGET PLANNING

As this topic had already been addressed under other topics, there was no further discussion.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Ms. Lloyd inquired when the vacancies on the EDC could be filled. There are 2 full seats and 1 alternate seat open. Mr. Watson will reach out to 2 new business owners he knows.

12. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Ms. Pobuda, second Mr. Burdick, to adjourn at 8:38 pm;
Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Ventre, Commission Secretary