

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2020 – 7:00PM  
VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM**

**PRESENT:** John Burdick (7:10), Donna LaPlante, Shelley Lloyd, Polly Pobuda, Meg Toro, Alternates Bill Baxter (7:05 connection dropped & resumed during meeting); Debbie Ventre; First Selectman Dan Jerram

**ABSENT:** Jack Casey, Brian Watson;

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** Kathryn Boughton

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

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

Ms. Ventre was seated for Brian Watson.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS**

No members of the public offered comment.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

March 9, 2020 Regular Meeting

**MOTION** Ms. Pobuda, second Ms. LaPlante, to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2020 regular meeting.

Ms. Lloyd mentioned that she noted two corrections. The spelling of Tonya's name is incorrect in the triathlon section. Additionally, she spoke with the Canton Girl Scouts of the Farmington District.

*Unanimously approved as amended.*

May 27, 2020 Special Joint Workshop

**MOTION** Ms. Lloyd, second Ms. Pobuda, to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2020 special meeting.

*Unanimously approved.*

**4. CONNECTICUT MAIN STREET CENTER MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

Chairman Toro noted that she is aware that they offer webinars but is not sure what is being offered in 2020 or 2021. The webinars seem to be more geared toward the businesses rather than EDC members. Ms. Pobuda indicated that she is not familiar with it. Ms. Lloyd noted that they have been out to present to New Hartford businesses and the EDC. Mr. Burdick asked if everyone is on their e-mail list. He

noted that there have been a couple of programs that seemed useful since the pandemic. It is on us to participate not for them to reach out to us. He suggests postponing the vote until after the mission discussion later in the agenda. Ms. Toro believes that if we spend funds for this we need to take advantage of the opportunities offered. Ms. Lloyd suggested that we need to disseminate the information about the programs to local businesses who could benefit. Our membership enables our businesses to participate in the programs.

Ms. Pobuda inquired if we have a link from the EDC page to enable members to participate.

## **5. BUSINESS SURVEY UPDATE**

Ms. Toro shared that our survey monkey subscription expired and we are not renewing it. She detailed statistics on the types of businesses that responded. Out of 154 surveys sent, 101 were opened and 24 responded. Coordination of public events, improved communication and additional marketing and publicity were the top three selections to improve the Business Climate. Respondents were dissatisfied with water and sewer, code enforcement and street maintenance. They rated police department, fire department and parking as satisfied. The top 4 ranked items for focus of a marketing image of this community are: recreational activities/events, natural environment, community atmosphere and seasonal tourism/tourist info. The top 4 items to be improved are: signage, internet presence, coordinated events and group advertising. 75% rated New Hartford average or better as a place to conduct business and 25% rated it below average or poor. Ms. Pobuda commented that the percentages are skewed since there were only 24 responses. Ms. Toro noted that since they took the time to respond we should listen to their concerns.

## **6. UPDATE FROM TRAILS COMMITTEE**

In Mr. Baxter's temporary absence, Mr. Jerram was asked to provide an update. He noted that the trails committee is scheduled to reconvene on the 15<sup>th</sup>, probably virtually. The challenges of the virtual platform are the difficulties in viewing the map online. The virtual meeting will be a public meeting and anyone will be able to join to observe. Ms. Pobuda suggested having the trails committee update on the July agenda. She inquired if the EDC could help to promote the plan of the committee.

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

Mrs. LaPlante noted that she is waiting on the decision for New Hartford Day and where that is going. She asked Mr. Jerram if we are going to have issues with CIRMA related to Open Farm Day if we wish to go forward. He responded that the greater concern is whether the Governor's Executive Orders will relax the limits on the size of gatherings. Mrs. LaPlante noted that she has not prepared a request to spend funds at this time and those expenses will probably impact the next fiscal year.

Ms. Lloyd stated that there had been a prior discussion some months ago about ordering two additional banners. Mr. Jerram commented that many events take time to build, but our Open Farm Day was surprisingly successful in its first year.

**MOTION** Ms. Lloyd, second Ms. Pobuda, to spend up to \$400 to purchase two additional Celebrate New Hartford Banners.  
*Unanimously approved.*

Mr. Baxter asked about the date for Open Farm Day. Ms. Lloyd and Ms. Ventre commented that it is September 19<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Ventre noted that the Historical Society Wine Tasting is scheduled for September 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Burdick stated that the Historical Society has cancelled that event. Ms. Pobuda suggested that another organization could possibly take it on. Mr. Burdick inquired if New Hartford Day is planned to go forward. Mr. Jerram indicated that they plan to go forward. They have started meetings to plan. In fact, they are also hoping to be able to provide the summer concert series. Ms. Pobuda commented that having both events on the same weekend offered the opportunity for us to advertise their events but we need information in order to be able to do so.

Ms. Lloyd shared that Harwinton recently had a drive-thru food truck festival and questioned whether we could have a similar type event. Mr. Jerram questioned whether that would be New Hartford Day or a new event.

## **8. NEW HARTFORD MOVING FORWARD SIGNS**

Ms. Toro noted that she has seen signs in Canton that say Open for Business funded by their Chamber. She questions whether our businesses would find that helpful or not. The Litchfield signs are more community focused and she is not certain if that EDC is the right organization to sponsor those. Ms. Pobuda mentioned that we are actually too late at this point. If we could have done this sooner it might have been more helpful. Ms. Toro agreed. Ms. Lloyd suggested putting this on our January agenda assuming 2021 is better. Ms. Pobuda suggested a sign that says "New Hartford 4 all Seasons". Ms. Lloyd stated she believes we should wait until next spring.

## **9. MISSION OF THE EDC**

Ms. Toro shared the Mission of the EDC from 2001 and questioned if it needs to be updated. Ms. Lloyd expressed that she likes the second paragraph but finds the first paragraph to be cumbersome. Ms. Lloyd asked for it to be included with the minutes for members to consider and discuss next month. Ms. Toro asked all members to consider What Do We Do? Who do we serve? How do we do it? Ms. Lloyd suggested it tie in to the Plan of Conservation and Development. Ms. Pobuda commented that EDC should be encouraging new businesses to come here which is what strengthening the tax base is. As an example, we should be seeking a business to take over the corner where Dunkin Donuts used to be.

Ms. Lloyd noted that the same issue has come up repeatedly over the years in that no one on this Commission is a marketing professional but there have not been funds available to hire someone who is. Mr. Baxter commented that we cannot be all things for all people. The Commission needs to identify specific goals for the year. Ms. Toro noted that she would like to see a clearer mission statement.

## 10. 2020 / 2021 BUDGET PLANNING

Ms. Lloyd asked Mr. Jerram if the EDC budget remains at \$6,000 for the next fiscal year. Mr. Jerram confirmed that it is.

Ms. Toro circled back to the topic of the Connecticut Main Street Center dues. Mr. Burdick noted that if we are not going to focus on developing the downtown area in accordance with the Connecticut Main Street Center principles it doesn't make sense to continue our membership. Ms. Lloyd commented that with the changes that we're seeing downtown that is certainly part of our focus – she believes that the information is valuable. Ms. Toro suggested that this be revisited next month. Ms. Pobuda pointed out that if we want it to come out of this fiscal year the vote needs to occur tonight as next month will be the next fiscal year. Mr. Baxter suggests taking the funds from this year's budget with a commitment to better utilize the membership in the upcoming year.

**MOTION** Mr. Baxter, second Ms. Lloyd, to pay the annual dues to renew our membership in Connecticut Main Street Center.

*Unanimously approved.*

Mr. Burdick commented that there are resources for the Trails project that could be utilized. Ms. Pobuda expressed appreciation for the discussion on this topic.

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None

## 12. ADJOURNMENT:

**MOTION** Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Pobuda, to adjourn at 8:24 pm; *Unanimously approved.*

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Ventre, Commission Secretary