PRESENT: Chairman Brian Watson, John Burdick, Meg Toro, Polly Pobuda, Steven Lam, Commission Secretary Madeleine Toro
ABSENT: Shelley Lloyd, Bill Baxter, Jack Casey
MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: None

1. CALL TO ORDER
Chairman Brian Watson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS
There was no public comment on any agenda items.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
   MOTION Mr. Watson, second Ms. Toro, to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2022 meeting. Unanimously approved.

4. New Hartford Tourism - Map Update - Brian
Mr. Watson had no new updates to share about the maps.

5. Tourism Website - Brian
Mr. Watson emphasized the importance of getting a tourism website, similar to one other towns such as Litchfield and Washington have. This would entice people to come into town and provide information on things to do in town. He informed everyone that search engine optimization (SEO) is a popular and effective tool that improves web traffic to certain websites by ensuring they appear as one of the first suggested sites on Google. Mr. Watson then showed tourism websites from several different towns such as Litchfield, Canton, and Bristol as examples. Bristol’s website uses SEO for their website. Ms. Toro inquired about who would be maintaining the website. Mr. Watson said a representative or a small group of people from the town would have to collaborate with whatever company is hired to make the website to make sure it is well maintained.

Mr. Watson then showed a SEO report of keywords and the order which certain websites appeared on Google upon typing in those keywords. For certain keywords containing popular
New Hartford attractions, such as “Farmington River tubing”, New Hartford’s town website does not even show up. The ultimate goal with a tourism website is to get New Hartford to be one of the first websites to show up when someone searches for attractions or activities nearby.

Mr. Watson informed the commission of the pricing of building a website using a company called HireSite. A few ways that this website could be paid for are by collaborating with other town groups, or asking businesses to pay a small fee, since it would directly benefit local businesses.

The commission unanimously agreed that a tourism website would be beneficial for the town. Ms. Pobuda expressed concern about paying for the website and getting approval for it. Ms. Toro inquired about next steps for pursuing the website. Mr. Watson suggested possibly getting HireSite to do a mock-up of a potential website for New Hartford. He also wants to present the idea of a tourism website to the Business Council. He mentioned that he would be willing to sit down with First Selectman Dan Jerram and discuss the idea with him.

The commission also discussed possible domain names, such as visitnewhartford.com, explorenewhartford.com, and a few others.

6. Potential Professional Economic Development Assistance - Brian
Mr. Watson believes that we should first focus on attracting people to come to New Hartford before we focus on hiring an economic development professional. Mr. Burdick stated that a professional consultant could guide us on how exactly to get people to come to town. Ms. Toro mentioned that we need to focus the most on developing a broad plan and figure out how to execute it. Ms. Pobuda suggested that we try to see what other towns are doing in terms of economic development and use that as a sort of guidance.

The commission unanimously agreed to table the discussion on hiring a professional economic development specialist, and instead make sure to stay committed to the overall goals of the EDC.

7. Triathlon - Polly
Ms. Pobuda informed everyone that the Litchfield Hills Triathlon will be run by Wilson Endurance Sports, which is owned by Mark Wilson and his wife Tanya. Mark Wilson has 25 years of experience coaching people for triathlons. The triathlon will be on July 9 at 7:30 AM and goes until 1:30 PM. The swimming portion is 750 meters, the biking part is 24.8 miles, and the run is 10 kilometers. More information about Mark Wilson and the triathlon is available at www.coachmarkwilson.com. Ms. Pobuda was excited to announce that 108 people have already
registered for the triathlon. She also wanted to mention Ms. Lloyd’s idea to hand out coupons to
local businesses for deals such as buy one get one free, 10% off discounts, and more. We could
make a list of what businesses have certain deals and hand out the lists to people at the triathlon.
This is less costly to businesses and attracts even more business than gift cards, which were
given out at last year’s triathlon. Ms. Pobuda stated that Ms. Lloyd wanted $200 to be
contributed to the budget for food for the triathlon.

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Pobuda, to contribute $200 for food for the triathlon.
*Unanimously approved.*

8. Marketing Ideas - Brian
Marketing ideas were covered in the discussion of the tourism website.

9. Budget - Brian
There are no budget updates.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Pobuda, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Madeleine Toro
Commission Secretary
Economic Development Commission