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

1. Call to Order
Chairman Brian Watson called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

2. Public Comment on Agenda Items
There was no public comment on any agenda items.

3. Membership of the EDC
Steven Lam has resigned from the EDC, because he is no longer a resident of New Hartford. Mr. Lam stated in his resignation letter that it was a pleasure to be a part of the EDC and he wish his time on the commission could have been longer.

The commission also took the time to welcome two new members Jessica Smith and Deirdre Tindall.

4. Approval of Minutes
   MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Ms. Pobuda, to approve the minutes from the March 14th, 2022 meeting. The motion was approved by 3 members, and 3 members abstained from voting due to the fact that they were not present at the March 14th meeting.

5. Tourism Website
Mr. Watson shared that he met with First Selectman Dan Jerram to discuss the tourism website. Mr. Jerram advised Mr. Watson to speak if front of the town Board of Selectmen in June or July to describe what the site will do and how it will benefit New Hartford. Ms. Lloyd inquired about possible grant money for building a website. Mr. Watson said that as far as he knows, there is no grant money available for building a tourism website. Ms. Tindall stated that she works with the town of Berlin at her job, and she sees how important it is to have a strong online marketing and use search engine optimization (SEO). She also emphasized that building a good website goes beyond just using SEO. It is essential to have a strong social media presence for the town and ensure that there is good content on the site.
Mr. Watson spoke about his experience using the company that could possibly make a tourism website for New Hartford. He stated that the company can write content for the website, and they use programs that make sure it is not plagiaristic. They also use SEO and artificial intelligence that can adapt to changes in Google’s algorithms to improve visibility of the site as changes occur. Ms. Lloyd stated that we must make sure we have the right resources to support and maintain a website like this. Mr. Watson suggested a few volunteers from the EDC come together to communicate with the marketing company.

Ms. Lloyd inquired about whether websites to local businesses would be included on the possible tourism website. Mr. Watson informed her that websites to the businesses will be directly linked, which will help the individual business websites grow as well and be more likely to appear further up on a search engine. Ms. Tindall also suggested that the EDC utilize Facebook more, since many people do not go to a website to find information about local businesses and events and would rather use social media platforms to find information.

6. Triathlon
Ms. Lloyd filled in Ms. Tindall and Ms. Smith about the details of the upcoming Litchfield Hills Triathlon. Ms. Lloyd requested that Mr. Watson reach out to the local Boy Scouts troop to see if they could work as security for the triathlon, as they did in last year’s triathlon. Ms. Lloyd also mentioned that there are paid positions available for those who would like to help set up and/or clean up after the triathlon. She also explained that this year she and Ms. Pobuda will be sending out letters to all the businesses that contribute donations to the triathlon thanking them for their contribution and explaining a little about the triathlon and how their donation is used.

Ms. Smith inquired about whether participants are informed about local businesses when they register for the triathlon. Ms. Lloyd informed her that as long as the business has a link to their website, the businesses will be promoted to participants upon registering, and there is a PDF that registered participants will get with a list of businesses in the area. Ms. Lloyd reminded everyone that the PDF must be updated this year.

Ms. Pobuda mentioned that last year, designated places where people could watch certain events were marked with signs, but she does not think it should be done again this year, as not many people used the designated spots.

Ms. Tindall stated that she and Mr. Burdick will be sure to add the triathlon to the Business Council website calendar, as well as inform businesses to reach out to Ms. Lloyd if they would like to make a donation.
7. Marketing Ideas
Ms. Smith suggested that we could create a “New Hartford passport” similar to a winery passport. Participants could check off the businesses that they have visited. If they have bought from all the businesses included in the passport, they could enter in some sort of raffle for a gift card. This would encourage people to visit local businesses. It could include more than just businesses; it could also be expanded to include hiking trails and other attractions in New Hartford. The commission agreed that this would be a good idea and possibly something to be given out at next year’s New Hartford day.

8. Budget
There are no budget updates.

    MOTION Ms. Lloyd, second Ms. Smith to allocate up to $250 of the budget for up to 20 signs for the triathlon. These signs will say “New Hartford Welcomes Triathletes”. Unanimously approved.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT
    MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Mr. Watson to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Madeleine Toro
Commission Secretary
Economic Development Commission