TOWN OF NEW HARTFORD  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, January 10, 2022 – 7:00 PM

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

1. CALL TO ORDER
Chairman Brian Watson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Mr. Baxter was seated for a vacancy.

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

3. Welcome Steven Lam
The commission took the time to welcome the newest commission member Steven Lam.

4. Election of Officers
Ms. Toro nominated Mr. Watson for reelection as chairman. He stressed that he will continue to be chairman, but he only wants the commission to be concerned with things that are pro-business and avoid focusing on minutia. He also mentioned that he wants to avoid any political agendas and partisan politics and just focus on uplifting local businesses and the town as a whole. Mr. Watson’s reelection was unanimously approved by the commission.

Mr. Burdick nominated Ms. Toro as vice-chair. The commission unanimously approved, and Ms. Toro accepted her election as vice-chair.

5. Approval of Minutes
   MOTION Ms. Pobuda, second Mr. Burdick, to approve the minutes of the November 8, 2021 regular meeting. There was a correction to the abbreviation “ARPA” (American Rescue Plan Act) which was incorrectly written in the minutes as “APRA”. Unanimously approved.

6. New Hartford Tourism – Map Update
Mr. Watson spoke to First Selectman Dan Jerram in November to see if there would be any other boards or committees in town that would be willing to contribute funds to get the maps done. Mr. Jerram thought that would be a good idea. Ms. Pobuda recommended that he compile a list of potential contributors, and then suggested that the Trails Committee and Recreation Department
could contribute. Ms. Toro also suggested the Business Council. Ms. Lloyd suggested the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen also be on the list of contributors.

Ms. Lloyd also mentioned the restaurant brochure that she was sent by the town clerk and how there are some edits that need to be made before the brochures are printed. She said that she will share the email with commission members soon.

7. Helping Existing Businesses
Ms. Lloyd mentioned doing a shorter version of the Dine New Hartford campaign in the spring. She commented that although the campaign was helpful in attracting people to the restaurants, it did not help other types of businesses in town. She thinks that the next campaign should be more all-encompassing to all types of local business. Mr. Burdick we expand the campaign to focus more of Shop New Hartford. Mr. Watson recently talked to local restaurant owner Jim Parrott, who said that the campaign didn’t really help attract many new customers, since a lot of his customer base is from outside New Hartford.

Mr. Watson suggested that the EDC go around to the businesses and ask them about their top three needs to help their business. We could then compile a list of the most common concerns and needs among local business owners. Mr. Lam then mentioned that we should focus more attention on promoting retail in town, such as Hardenco.

Ms. Lloyd emphasized that we need to get as many businesses as possible on the town website and take advantage of the Discover Litchfield Hills website.

Ms. Pobuda also mentioned that the town clerk has a drawer full of things that belong to the EDC, so she thinks it is important that we think about potential places to store these things.

Mr. Watson mentioned that marketing is a concern for many local businesses, and it is important to take advantage of social media, since that is where many people look for information nowadays. He suggested we link the business directory on the New Hartford town website to the EDC’s social media sites such as Facebook and possibly Instagram in the future. Mr. Lam suggested that the town website add more detail to the business listing, to which Ms. Lloyd stated that there already is a lot of room on the website to add detailed descriptions and picture, but most business owners do not utilize these features.

8. Attracting New Businesses
Mr. Baxter informed the commission that he has made a pitch to use the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to expand economic development and hiring an economic development specialist to develop a plan for New Hartford. Winsted has recently done this, according to Mr. Baxter. Ms. Toro stated that the town’s prior plan of conservation and development included
exploring the possibility of hiring an economic development professional between 2015 and 2019, however this hasn’t happened yet. She believes we need someone now more than ever. Ms. Lloyd pointed out the many empty buildings in the downtown area and how New Hartford could really benefit from a town planner. Ms. Baxter responded that we need to expand this to include not only the downtown but also other areas of town such as Pine Meadow and Bakersville.

Mr. Watson recommended that we reach out to other committees and boards in town to see how we can collaborate to grow the town economically. Ms. Pobuda also mentioned that she has attended many town meetings and there are typically not many members of the public present, which she believes is concerning.

Ms. Pobuda suggested that we write a letter on behalf of the EDC to the First Selectman asking for a part-time marketing professional to help promote local businesses. Mr. Baxter stated that he agreed but stressed that we need to commit to allocating the funds need to hire someone. Ms. Pobuda said that the letter should include this information as well. Mr. Baxter and Ms. Pobuda agreed to work together to write a letter, which will be emailed to members when it is done and discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Watson concluded the discussion by saying that the EDC’s main focuses at this time should be to stop segregation of different committees and get everyone to come together to grow the town, as well as hiring people, such as town planners and marketing professionals, to aide us in the process. He plans to send out an email to all the commission and board leaders to encourage collaboration in between boards.

9. Update from Trails Committee
Mr. Baxter informed the commission that there are unfortunately no updates on the Trails Committee. Previously planned meetings have been cancelled, since the town’s priorities have shifted since the New Hartford House fire, according to Mr. Baxter.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT
MOTION Mr. Burdick, second Mr. Watson, to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 PM. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Madeleine Toro
Commission Secretary
Economic Development Commission