

Town of Wethersfield
Economic Development & Improvement Commission
Regular Meeting
Thursday, November 10, 2005 - 12:00 Noon
Town Manager's Conference Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

1. Call To Order - Chair Rosania called the meeting to order at 12:01 P.M.
2. Attendance - Members in attendance: Chair Betty Rosania, Frank Frago, Howard Greenblatt, Kate Mullen, Ralph Kelleher, Paul Montinieri, Joe Cornelio, Kenneth Rizzio and Doug Sacks.

Also in attendance: Bonnie Therrien-Town Manager, Carmela Moore-Chamber of Commerce, Andrew Adil-Town Council, Phil Knecht-Planning and Zoning Commission, Peter Gillespie-Economic Development Manager/Town Planner and Denise Bradley-Assistant Planner.

3. Old Business

- a. Real Estate Breakfast - Peter Gillespie noted that the event held on October 25th was well attended by approximately ten realtors, several town staff, Mayor Russ Morin, Town Manager Bonnie Therrien and Police Chief Cetran. The next event will be tentatively held in late January.
- b. Loan Program - Commissioner Kenneth Rizzio reported that the Town Attorney is in the process of updating the loan forms. He noted that the Finance Committee would like to identify areas in the business survey that highlight ways to promote business. Additionally, he commented on the STEAP funding as it pertains to Rocky Hill. Mr. Rizzio noted that clarification should be sought from Rocky Hill as to whether their façade improvement program will be dispersed as a loan or a grant. A discussion then ensued regarding the status of the Atlantic Inn loan. Peter Gillespie received a letter from John Kulesza's attorney claiming that it is Technology Group LLC not Mr. Kulesza that is delinquent on town taxes and requested that the EDIC reconsider their prior decision not to fund the loan request due to property tax delinquency. The town attorney has indicated that in setting up the program, it was not the intent of the town to engage with anyone who owed the town money and that the town has great discretion in approving any loan funding. Commissioner Frank Frago commented that the issue should be left to the attorneys to resolve. The Commission expressed consensus not to reconsider their decision at this time.
- c. Business Visitation Program - Bonnie Therrien noted that a discussion ensued at the last Town Council meeting regarding the importance of the program. Peter Gillespie reported that a meeting would be set to jumpstart the program again.
- d. Farmer's Market - Bonnie Therrien noted that a meeting will be held on November 30th at the Nature Center. The Trust for Public Land will do a presentation on preserving open space and keeping local farms viable and input from local farmers will be sought.
- e. Silas Deane Highway Plan - Peter Gillespie reported that Fuss & O'Neill were set to deliver plans that reflect their presentation made at the Silas Deane Highway Advisory Committee meeting in October. A report will be presented at the November 17th Land Use Committee meeting.
- f. Salute To Business - Carmela Moore reported that she has been making arrangements with the Wethersfield Country Club. Ms. Moore noted that the Chamber of Commerce had discussed the value of the event and concerns over anticipated attendance. She discussed that in the past many people have indicated their intentions to attend and then not show up, throwing off the head-count. The Chamber discussed the option of charging \$25 for the event. Commissioner Doug Sacks asked what the cost would include and commented that most people would be unwilling to pay anything above \$20. Ms. Moore indicated that the cost for the ticket would include hot hor d'oeuvres, hot foods, beer,

wine and soda. There would be a cash bar set up for mixed drinks. Ms. Moore noted that the Chamber is not looking to make money from the event but to get a commitment from people to attend. Chair Rosania asked how much the Country Club would be charging per person. Carmela Moore responded that the cost is approximately \$20-23 per person with gratuity. Commissioner Frago motioned to approve charging \$15 per person for the Salute to Business event. Commissioner Kate Mullen seconded and all voted in favor.

4. New Business

- a. RFP Marketing Assistance/Tourism Commission - Peter Gillespie reported that the meeting scheduled for November 18th has been cancelled and will be rescheduled.
- b. Shop Wethersfield Program - Peter Gillespie reported that the Finance Committee had agreed to analyze past business surveys to identify trends. Many businesses responded that they would like to see more local traffic and recognition. The Finance Committee expressed consensus that a "Shop Wethersfield" campaign was important. Bonnie Therrien commented that the idea is definitely worth pursuing. Commissioner Ralph Kelleher noted that the town may have trouble with the campaign because it had missed out on many of the "lifestyle" type stores. Mr. Kelleher discussed that while he does shop in Wethersfield there are just some products that are not available locally. Carmela Moore discussed that often the biggest hurdle facing small business owners is that they cannot afford the expense of advertising and how offering a section in the publication of Wethersfield Life could be very beneficial. Peter Gillespie noted that any proposed initiatives would be brought before the EDIC and the Chamber before moving forward. Chair Rosania commented that she views the potential campaign as a great idea.
- c. STEAP Application - Peter Gillespie reported that the town will be submitting two new funding applications as follows:
 1. \$500,000 for the Silas Deane Highway revitalization.
 2. \$400,000 to fund a façade improvement program in areas outside of the Silas Deane Highway.

Mr. Gillespie noted that none of the funds from the previous STEAP award has been spent.

- d. Display Board - Peter Gillespie explained that the Tourism Commission has plans to attend a tourism event at the new convention center in March and that the town does not currently have anything for the Commission to use for their display. Mr. Gillespie discussed a proposal submitted by a local company called Wingsite. Andrew Adil noted that the commission should also look to see what John Oldham Studios may have to offer. Chair Rosania expressed her support for purchasing a display board but noted that if purchased, it should be kept in possession of the town. Additionally, it was discussed that a table top display may not be big enough and therefore purchase of a larger unit should be pursued.
- e. CIP 2006/2007 - Peter Gillespie reported that in the past funding had been approved for Silas Deane Highway revitalization, historic light fixtures on Main Street and for the façade loan program. The 2006/2007 CIP request is due December 9th. Chair Rosania commented that she would like to see the \$50,000 earmarked for additional historic light fixtures on Main Street be put towards improving the four-way intersection at Church Street and the Silas Deane Highway. Commissioner Rizzio commented that coupled with the improvements currently underway at Town Hall, a few nice light fixtures could make a big difference aesthetically. Commissioner Mullen made a motion to approve the CIP 2006/2007 as submitted with modifications. Commissioner Montinieri seconded and all voted in favor.
- f. 2006 Meeting Schedule - Commissioner Frago motioned to approve the 2006 Meeting Schedule as submitted. Commissioner Rizzio seconded and all voted in favor.

5. Reports of the Town Manager -

Town Manager's Report - Town Manager Bonnie Therrien reported on the following:

- a. Four new members of the Town Council will be sworn in on Monday November 14, 2005.
- b. John Lepper, Property Maintenance Inspector has been working to update the Blighted Structures List. Five of the previously listed properties have been taken off the list and the town will continue to work with the remaining property owners.
- c. The Town Council approved allowing \$100 per day citations to be issued.

Planning & Zoning Commission Liason's Report - Phil Knecht reported that the Commission approved a motion to express support for the 71-unit residential development proposed for 2340 Berlin Turnpike in Newington.

Director of Planning and Economic Development's Report - Peter Gillespie reported on the following:

- a. The Land Use Committee meeting will be held on November 17th.
 - b. Rocky Hill will sponsor a workshop on community revitalization.
 - c. The application to convert an existing building into twelve age-restricted condominium units at 295 Ridge Road was approved.
 - d. The Inland Wetland Commission approved the proposed application for an age-restricted residential development on Folly Brook Boulevard.
 - e. The Fire House Bar and Grill at 1151 Silas Deane Highway is now open.
6. Chairman's Report - Chair Rosania thanked all Commissioners and town staff that had gone out to the Ocean State Job Lots grand opening. Ms. Rosania spoke about concerns she has over meeting attendance. Additionally, Ms. Rosania noted that both Kainan and Baby Boom do not seem to be doing well.

7. Sub-Committee Reports -

Financial Strategies - Commissioner Rizzio asked that if any member is approached with questions regarding the status of the Atlantic Inn loan to defer them to the town attorney. Commissioner Frago noted that the next sub-committee meeting will be held on December 7th at 4:00 P.M and will be held regularly on the first Wednesday of the month.

8. Minutes- Approval of [October 2005 meeting minutes](#) - Joe Cornelio asked that the minutes reflect his attendance at the October 13, 2005 meeting. Commissioner Frago motioned to approve the minutes with corrections. Commissioner Montinieri seconded and all voted in favor.

9. Correspondence

- a. 2005 Nominations For Salute To Business
- b. 2005 Ct Governors Conference on Culture and Tourism - Nov 16/17
- c. Land Use Committees Meeting Nov 17, 2005
- d. 2006 Meeting Schedule

10. Adjournment - Chair Rosania adjourned the meeting at 1:37 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Bradley, Assistant Planner