

TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION

Minutes of the regular meeting of September 11, 2003

Chairman Anthony Camilliere called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m.

Members present: Tony Camilliere
Frank Frago
Tom Grottke
Joan Hughes
Cindy Jacobs
Chris Lyons
Ken Rizzio
Jon Vining

Also present: Kitch Breen Czernicki, Mayor
Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager
Peter Gillespie, Dir., Planning and Econ. Development (P&ED)
Phil Knecht, Planning & Zoning
Joe Cornelio, town resident
Marie Massaro, P&ED, EDIC Secy

Tony Camilliere introduced and welcomed new members Joan Hughes and Cindy Jacobs. He then introduced Joe Cornelio, a resident interested in the EDIC's work, and Marie Massaro, grants administrator for Planning and Economic Development, who will act as EDIC Secretary. Tony then welcomed Peter Gillespie, new Director of Planning and Economic Development for the town. Bonnie Therrien passed a membership listing and asked members to update and ensure its accuracy.

[Minutes of the August meeting](#) were reviewed; a motion was made by Tom Grottke and seconded by Frank Frago for approval. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Bonnie Therrien reported that Peter is moving to address priorities of creating an inventory of available properties, updating the strategic plan, and working with her on the economic development summit. The summit will be held October 15th. Tony suggested starting at 5 p.m. and serving a light meal, with the meeting getting underway at 5:30. Bonnie will try to secure the police department community room for the meeting. Ken Rizzio asked if realtors would be attending the summit; Bonnie said they would be invited and that she's also planning a breakfast meeting with them.

Bonnie stated the EDIC has recently created several subcommittees, and asked new members to sign up for at least one. Cindy Jacobs and Joan Hughes volunteered for Communications/Marketing. Chris Lyons offered to serve on Communications/Marketing and Development. Phil Knecht offered to work with Peter on the inventory of available properties. Tom Grottke asked if there were goals and a working charter for each of the subcommittees; Bonnie stated that she and Peter will develop these.

Bonnie noted that the meeting to review the Plan of Conservation and Development has been changed to September 29th at 6 p.m. Tom Grottke, Ken Rizzio, and Chris Lyons will represent EDIC. Tony said he'd also check to see if Betty Rosania is available.

Peter stated he was developing the inventory of available properties, touring areas of town with the assessor, and had upcoming meetings with Paul Courchaine of the Silas Deane Revitalization Committee, and Brian Miller from CERC to follow up on their proposal to EDIC. He also wants to update the economic development area of the town website.

Cindy Jacobs asked if there's a deadline for the available properties database and how Peter will handle its ongoing maintenance. Peter said he's working toward a mid-late October completion date and said the real estate community would be helpful in ongoing maintenance. Jon Vining suggested the database be linked to a map so everyone can see contiguous properties. Tom Grottke asked what criteria were being used for inclusion in the database. Peter said that it would include space for lease and for sale, land for sale and sites that could be redeveloped for highest and best use.

Tom noted that CERC is an important vehicle for marketing properties to prospects outside Connecticut; Bonnie noted the MetroHartford Chamber can also be helpful. Phil noted that the New York area market is driving some developers to move up the line and look at Greater Hartford, and EDIC should support regional efforts to attract these developers if they fit our goals.

Tom asked Peter if he had relationships with major developers from his previous job which might be helpful. Peter said developers' interests are very site-specific, and we don't have enough synthesized data to work with yet. Tom suggested that when developers do approach the town, EDIC members should be contacted to see if anyone has an existing relationship with them.

The discussion next focused on the Cornfest. Chris Lyons suggested the EDIC hand out flyers to promote the summit. Cindy Jacobs suggested a listing of new town officials. Chris recommended a plastic bag that attendees could use to hold handouts from other exhibitors. Tony noted the bag should contain a town map, survey results, and a list of past recipients of the Salute to Business award. Tom suggested a list of new businesses in town be added. Bonnie suggested using large-scale town maps behind the booth.

Bonnie noted that volunteers are still needed to cover the booth. The following time slots were filled:

Tom Grottke and Tony Camilliere: 10-11 am

Joan Hughes: 10:30 to 11:00 am

Ken Rizzio: 11:00 to 11:30 am

Kitch Breen Czernicki: 12:30 pm to 1 pm.

Phil Knecht, Planning and Zoning Commission liaison, welcomed Peter and said he's looking forward to working with him. The review of zoning regulations, in process for nearly two years, is nearing completion. Peter noted that the design review process needs to be specific and clearly explained in order to encourage, rather than discourage, prospective developers. Tom agreed that not all development is "good development." Tony stated that the EDIC should be represented in some capacity on any design review board. Peter stated the guidelines for the DRB are in draft form. Tony asked Peter if he could provide an update of recent activity (leases, sales) in the EDIC monthly package; Peter agreed to do this.

Tony directed discussion to the economic development summit, and suggested a subcommittee should work with Bonnie and Peter on organizing this event. It was agreed that a special meeting of the EDIC will be held September 25th at 8:30 in the Town Manager's conference room. All members were encouraged to attend.

Bonnie Therrien next discussed the Strategic Plan meeting. She noted there was much discussion of economic development, and that participants agreed the overall plan was obsolete. Mayor Czernicki noted that the intent was to discuss the entire plan, not just economic development. She pointed to the recent Hartford Courant article, and said members need to continue working the media to raise the profile of the EDIC and the town.

Bonnie updated members on the status of the Silas Deane Highway Beautification project funding. State money will probably not be available. Northeast Utilities approved changes proposed by the committee; it's now being reviewed by the DOT. Tony suggested this item be reviewed again on next month's agenda.

Kitch discussed next weekend's Cornfest and the firefighters' convention, drawing representatives from 88 towns, which should boost Cornfest attendance. The Tourism District completed an impressive calendar. She also stated that in a meeting with Governor Rowland and local Republican leaders, she asked for redevelopment funding for the Silas Deane Highway.

Tom Grottke made a motion to adjourn at 1:35; Phil Knecht seconded the motion. The vote to adjourn was unanimous.