

Town of Wethersfield
Economic Development and Improvement Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2005

Members Present

Chair, Betty Rosania, Joe Cornelio, Don Unwin, Chris Lyons, Paul Montinieri, Howard Greenblatt, Doug Sachs, Ralph Keleher, Cindy Jacobs, Joan Hughes. Also present were: Bonnie Therrien, Mr. Gillespie, Christine Paul, Phil Knecht

Chairperson Betty Rosania called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM.

Minutes

The [minutes of the December meeting](#) were reviewed and few changes were requested as follows: On page one Frank Frago's name was misspelled, on page two Chris Lyons needs to replace Ken Lyons, and the word to added to...the commission is going (to) strictly focus on SDH. The approval of the minutes with the changes was moved by: Paul Montinieri and seconded by Don Unwin. Vote was affirmative.

Chair Report

Chair Rosania started the meeting by welcoming the newly appointed member Ralph Keleher.

Other items mentioned:

- Meeting with Northeast Utilities about new lampposts was informative. They would be 14' tall. Having all lines buried underground would be cost prohibitive. NU will submit a proposal with costs so Mr. Gillespie can submit them to CIP. The chair suggests we could start with one pole at the newly renovated Town Hall as a model.
- The Northgate planting should be done by the end of the fiscal year.
- Bev Piercez asked for a guesstimate for the cost of traffic light and intersection improvements to include the laying of conduits to be done at least before paving is done. The Town Manager suggested the commission look at other towns that have done similar work like Hazard Avenue in Enfield, Hop meadow Street in Simsbury, and West Hartford.
- Met with Andy Adil, Peter, Bonnie and the Mayor to come up with realistic budget goals for the commission. All agreed that it is important that Mr. Gillespie get a professional full time assistant especially since he has to cover six committees. Bonnie mentioned that in Rocky Hill they have a full time person for Planning and a full time person for Economic Development as well as 1&1/2 people for support staff. Commissioner Unwin suggested the assistant for Mr. Gillespie could have the duty of overseeing and coordinating all processes involved in completing projects including the permit process. That way delays can be reduced, since delays cost time and money. This could help eliminate unnecessary added meetings, ensure each person gets what they need, and get in-house approvals. Phil Knecht stated that it would be helpful to develop a reputation among architects and realtors that Wethersfield is a pleasant and efficient town to work with. He added that he is aware of a federally funded group that helps towns create a "roadmap" for prospective developers. He knows this was done for Middletown and will find out more information for Mr. Gillespie. Many present expressed interest in that type of service or help.
- Bonnie stated that the steps needed to get Mr. Gillespie a professional assistant would be for Peter to formulate a position, then Bonnie would establish a salary, and with a letter of endorsement from EDIC they could seek approval from the Council.
- The Chair expressed a need for help in sitting in on the Silas Deane Highway Advisory Committee meetings. Mr. Gillespie mentioned that although Commissioner Grottko was not able to help last time, he told Peter that he would be able to alternate attendance of these meetings.

Marketing and Communications Subcommittee Report

Commissioner Lyons summarized the work of the Committee by discussing the Ad in the Greater Hartford Metro Guide, Web Site, Business Visitation, and the Realtors Breakfast.

- Commissioner Sachs suggested that it is best to place ads in the top right hand corner of a page. In the future this committee plans to meet with McGee Marketing and the Tourism Commission to coordinate efforts for advertising. The chair encouraged that the town seize the moment and coordinate efforts and connections with what is happening with Adrian's Landing
- Mr. Gillespie mentioned that the goal for the website is to make it more prominent and easy to access and are working on this with Tom in IT.
- Commissioner Lyons stated that they plan to get the results of the business visitation to Council shortly. Commissioner Lyons welcomed new members to help with visitations and stated that he felt this work should be a cornerstone of what this commission does. The Town Manager expressed an urgent need for more people to help. The chair strongly emphasized that each member is expected to be involved in the visitation program. Mr. Gillespie commented that to make the survey more convenient for business owners the survey could be done over the phone as the first contact.
- Phil Knecht encouraged continued efforts to provide interest in the breakfasts by locating the breakfasts in an available building and providing information about specific properties and costs. Mr. Gillespie stated that this would be possible, but it would take some logistics to be worked out since some buildings do not have heat etc. Commissioner Hughes agreed that we need something to attract commercial business. . Commissioner Jacobs mentioned that she is working for Parks & Recreation on a brochure to promote the town and suggests the possibility of this information being used to make a brochure for realtors and potential developers.

Finance Subcommittee Report

Commissioner Frago is out of town and Commissioner Rizzio could not make it today. Mr. Gillespie shared that they continue to work on the loan and grant programs.

Development Subcommittee Report

Representative not present. Mr. Gillespie reported that they met with the Mayor and the liaison with the Council Andy Adil. He will be preparing for them a listing of the potential sites in town that may generate potential development. He is close to having that done. Mr. Gillespie said he plans to meet with this committee before the end of the month and then have the list back to this commission for the next meeting - so all everyone can be in agreement. The Council has asked to have at least our beginning discussions about where to focus our efforts in development as an agency because it is important for them to have options and they understand the facts and development potential of some of the properties.

Town Manager's Report

Bonnie Therrien received the Primer on Economic Development from Washington.

- Bonnie reported that Rae Ann found a federal grant available for economic development. One of four criteria is required:
 - Public works Infrastructure
 - Crafting & Implementation of a comprehensive Development Strategy
 - Local & national & university centered based technically assisted research project
 - Revolving loan funds /requiring proof are in a distressed mode, such as: low income, or reduced tax base

The marked items are what we would base our request on. There is no deadline for the grant but the sooner the better since the money is certainly limited.

- The Grand List will probably be level or a little less this year because it will be based on property tax rolls as of October 1, 2004. The present construction projects will be reflected in future grand lists so we simply must continue to move forward.
- Met with the Town Manager and Economic Development Manager from Rocky Hill and plan on a joint meeting with the developers.

Town Council Liaison's Report

Andy Adil was not present.

PZC Liaison Report

Phil Knecht did not have a report; he asked Mr. Gillespie if he knew of any new items.

Mr. Gillespie stated that there are two age restricted housing developers working on projects, which are in the early and conceptual stage, going through the permit process. They are:

1. At the end of Old Reservoir Rd., high end 350K single family free standing.
2. On Folly Brook, these have a couple of units attached on the east side.

Town Planner/Economic Development Manager's Report

Mr. Gillespie noted all members have his report and will note what may have changed since last time.

Review of New Business Activity

A few items mentioned were as follows:

- Office Depot is hoping to open in February.
- AJ Wright took another 10-11K sq. feet.
- Cumberland Farms has been approved but has been temporarily held up.
- Nathan Hale is adding 42 more units probably with state funding and income restriction. They negotiated a tax deal a few years ago as well.

The chair asked about Carnival since she gets asked about this property often. Mr. Gillespie stated that the owner is Mr. Many Pine who also owns Dunkin Donuts. Mr. Pine wants to put a drive through Dunkin Donuts there and has presented the concept to P&Z. This was not terribly well received by P&Z and they sent him away with many questions, comments, and concerns. The main concern is the traffic issue. Even though the current regulations would permit it, it would still require a special permit and would be subject to Planning and Zoning.

Design Review Advisory Committee

This committee will look into the situation at Carnival as well. Tonight will be their first meeting. Mr. Gillespie mentioned that he reviewed members of this committee and stated that there are five members and one alternate.

Silas Deane Highway Advisory Committee

This committee had a public forum in early December with forty people attending. Some property and business owners were recruited as new members for this committee to get involved. Mr. Leonardo Guglianti who owns the cosmetology school has already been appointed, others are getting ready. The chair asked if the representative from Colvest was one. Mr. Gillespie said that he has attended meetings but has not said he wants to be appointed yet. Also, the developer for CVS has expressed interest and we would like to get him on board so could have the advantage of a

developer's perspective.

Suggestion: Publish an EDIC Annual Report

Mr. Gillespie is thinking about putting together an annual report for EDIC that would consist of taking highlights from all the monthly reports. It could be something simple like a four page report that would promote what we are doing; which is impressive to go over. He will have this for the next meeting.

Wethersfield Shopping Center

Mr. Gillespie stated that CVS is definitely moving in soon and will probably have a ribbon cutting. Sleepy's is definitely moving in shortly. Quiznos is now open.

Silas Deane Highway Merchants Association

The chair asked where we stand in putting this group together. The Town Manager said it is so hard to get Silas Deane Highway business people to get onto committees that she feels we need to get the Silas Deane Highway Advisory Committee established first. Mr. Gillespie commented that the plan is to have those on the SDHAC be the core people to develop this association.

Salute To Business Event

Mr. Gillespie reported that this event was better attended than last year and generally had favorable responses. Some commented they felt the Chamber ran more of it than EDIC did, but the reverse was said about the event last year, so we continue to try to reach a happy medium. The chair requested that she questions the value of continuing the survey done by the Chamber of Commerce and would like this topic put on as an agenda item for the next EDIC meeting.

Loan /Grant Program

Mr. Gillespie handed out information pages and reviewed them.

- The Silas Deane Highway Façade Grant Program would be using 200K from STEAP money, and only require a 40% match from the Applicant. The Façade Loan Program would be available for Old Wethersfield and the Berlin Turnpike and would not use STEAP money. It would use 40K we already have and then request 60K from CIP to have a total of 100K available. Both programs would require a design review.
- It was asked what is done with the rest of the 500K if the 200K is used for the façade program. Mr. Gillespie stated that 250K would be for streetscapes and 50K for administrative costs, which could include hiring a landscape architect and creating an updated master plan.
- Commissioner Unwin asked who prioritizes the use of the 250K. Mr. Gillespie said that that has not been figured out yet. Probably EDIC, Silas Deane Highway Advisory Committee and the Town Council. Then Don asked who decides on who will qualify for the 200K, and if thought had been given to areas or types of buildings to get the most bang for your buck. Mr. Gillespie replied that possibly the Town Center area which is from Nott Street to Maple Street would get the most points, or areas that have had long term blight, but that EDIC will be commenting on that as we begin to put drafts together. Initial work will come out of the Finance Committee of this commission, and then go through the normal process. When a concern was voiced about having applications go through so many groups; Bonnie replied that herself, Peter and the Finance Committee, will initially review the applications and they will take care of it.
- Bonnie expressed her concern for a high visual impact for the Northgate planting. She wants something there for spring and summer so wants installation as soon as possible. She also voiced concerns about the amount of maintenance it would require and suggested the installation be run by Public Works to ensure commitment to proper upkeep, otherwise it could look worse than nothing at all in a few years. Commissioner Unwin made the same comment to beware of maintenance intensive plantings that could look poor in a few years if not properly

cared for.

- Commissioner Unwin commented that on small buildings a new paint job could show immediate results, as far as getting the most bang for the buck.
- Commissioner Cornelio suggested that the investment of hiring one landscape architect to be made available to all of the committees would meet many of our current urgent needs. Mr. Gillespie responded that they are in the process of finding a landscape architect and RFQs are due next Friday. He continued to say that it is possible that some of the money spent on a landscape architect will come from the 25K available to the SDHAC for the Northgate planting.
- The chair requested there be benches installed along the SDH, and noted she has seen people using overturned shopping carts for this purpose. Phil Knecht agreed that he would love to see a path and benches placed along the SDH.
- Commissioners Jacobs and Unwin stated that they want to standards and parameters established for facades as an example, before we hand out money. The chair concurred that she feels that it is essential to establish guidelines and they be strictly enforced. Mr. Gillespie said that there are already some design guidelines in the regulations but they do need specific recommendations for this. He is not sure if we will have guidelines before we give out money, but will get recommendations from the landscape architect to have a consistent theme in different areas. Design Review will also be working on this. Bonnie and Peter concluded that the program needs to be put in place first, which will probably not come together until April, and by then they will probably have a landscape architect on board; so it may actually all come together at the same time.

New Business

Web Site

Commissioner Montineri, Mr. Gillespie and Tom will be meeting next week.

- The suggestion was made to develop a virtual tour of historic homes and sites of significance.
- Commissioner Keleher mentioned that he met with Dr. Benfield at CCSU who said he has created virtual tours in the past using GIS maps, and said it is on the website already.
- Mr. Gillespie said that Tourism already has one.
- It was asked how much money is available for this type of thing. Mr. Gillespie commented that it is not much since it comes from EDIC. The chair responded that it is about 2K.
- Commissioner Cornelio made the suggestion that the tour also include events showing people participating and walking around.

Strategic Planning Committee

Bonnie said she is still looking for an update from the committee on what we want in it.

- The chair thought we had already given input. Mr. Gillespie and Town Manager said they had not received any feedback yet.
- Bonnie stated that the last Strategic Plan was from 1988 and it was still on the website even though many of the goals have been completed and long gone. Now we need to update goals to include what they want to get done in the next 5-10 years.
- It was clarified to the members that the only input needed would be those areas that apply to EDIC.
- The chair requested that staff exurb sections from the Strategic Plan that apply to EDIC and send or email it to the members to refresh our memories.
- The chair asked Town Manager if she actually sticks to the Strategic Plan. Bonnie replied 'Yes' she does, she did it when she was in Burlington to set up budgets.
- It was decided a good way to address this need is to have the Marketing Committee do this for the commission.

Silas Deane Highway Advisory Committee

Mr. Gillespie reported that a RFQ has been put out, they are due next Friday, and they will be reviewed the following week. They will be reviewed with Rocky Hill because they may use the same landscape architect to have a consistent theme for the entire highway corridor.

Budget

Mr. Gillespie reported that last years budget was \$83,141 and most was spent in salary and wages and stated that since there is no secretary or grants person there is still money left. Of the 56K left 15K will be taken out for the loan program and \$1,400 will come out for the ad in the Hartford Business Journal bringing the total left to \$39,600. Then once there is a secretary in place this will further decrease.

- The chair expressed concern about having left over money and how that would affect the ability of EDIC to get more money next year if all is not used this year. She asked for ideas from the members. Some ideas included using it for the landscape architect, or light poles.
- Mr. Gillespie mentioned that if the commission wants to see him get a professional full time assistant, then EDIC or Planning and Zoning needs to endorse money for that. The Town Manager agreed and Commissioner Hughes stated that whatever Peter needs he should get.
- Commissioner Montinieri asked Bonnie when money can be moved from other departments. Bonnie said that not until April.
- The chair asked to entertain a motion for personnel help for Mr. Gillespie so can get more work out and enforce what we already require. She also agreed with the need for a landscape architect and lampposts are good ideas. Bonnie once again stated that she is convinced that an LA would be the most helpful in all areas.
- The chair asks again what motion to entertain. Commissioner Unwin asks for suggestions for the wording to request staff for Mr. Gillespie. Mr. Gillespie suggested that they request a budget not to be less than last year and to pursue budgetary resources to retain additional professional assistance would be enough. He stated that this needs to be done for the budget due by the end of January, so this is the last meeting to request it.
- Commissioner Unwin so moved that motion and Commissioner Montinieri seconded it. The chair said she would like to amend it stating the need for professional versus part time help. All voted in favor.
- Commissioner Hughes commented that she has gotten a lot of positive comments about the few lampposts we already have.

New member to the commission

The chair welcomes Ralph Keleher thanks him for joining the committee, extends best wishes, and she hopes he will be an active participant.

Brownfields

Bonnie noted that she has put in an EPA Brownfield request but since it is a federal grant it may take a while. However, we do have letters of support from both Senator Dodd and Senator Lieberman.

The chair confirms that the Marketing Committee will supply the input for the Strategic Plan and asks that copies be sent to all the members.

The chair asks for any comments or suggestions. She entertains a motion to adjourn. Phil Knecht so moved, and Commissioner Unwin seconded it.

Chairperson Betty Rosania adjourned the meeting at 1:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted
Christine Paul