

Town of Wethersfield
Economic Development and Improvement Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 10, 2004

Town Manager's conference room, Town Hall

Members present

Anthony Camilliere, Chairman, John Breglio, Joe Cornelio, Frank Frago, Joan Hughes, Cindy Jacobs, Phil Knecht, P&Z liaison, Ken Rizzio, Betty Rosania, and Jon Vining. Also present were Bonnie Therrien, Peter Gillespie, Marie Massaro and Julie Montinieri. Members absent were Tom Grottke and Chris Lyons.

Minutes

Chairman Camilliere called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. and asked for a motion to approve [the May meeting minutes](#). A motion was made by Frank Frago, seconded by Ken Rizzio and unanimously passed to approve the minutes with one minor change. Chairman Camilliere noted it was his last EDIC meeting, and he thanked members for their hard work in moving EDIC forward in a positive direction.

Marketing/Communications subcommittee report

Joan Hughes reported the business visitation program is going very well. About 35 visits have been completed, and all interviewed were very appreciative for the chance to discuss their concerns. More volunteers are needed for this program.

John Breglio noted that they would try to schedule meetings with area realtors once a quarter, and focus the next session on commercial realtors, hopefully using a completed available properties inventory as a draw.

Finance subcommittee report

Ken Rizzio said the group met the previous day, finalizing a letter that will go to seven area banks asking each to consider a \$40,000 contribution to the revolving loan program. Peter Gillespie noted that the Town was working with the Town of Rocky Hill to submit a joint grant to the State's Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) with a focus on revitalizing the Silas Deane Highway.

Development subcommittee report

Peter Gillespie reported that he met with Councilor Adil and Bonnie Therrien to discuss redevelopment. Mr. Gillespie explained the difference between redevelopment statutes, which focus on eliminating blighted and substandard properties, and municipal development statutes, which focus on expanding the business and industrial base. He believes the Town has more opportunity with municipal development. He noted the CCSU intern is about 60% complete with the inventory, and that will help identify areas to initially target. A fall referendum is the goal but may not be feasible. The first preference would be to approach private developers. The subcommittee wants to have a workshop with representatives of other towns that have redevelopment programs. Mr. Gillespie noted that the EDIC already has development authority; the Town would have to identify a redevelopment entity, which could be EDIC or something else.

Cindy Jacobs joined the meeting at 12:40.

Town Manager's Report

Bonnie Therrien elaborated on the proposal for \$1 million in STEAP grant funds from a joint Wethersfield/Rocky Hill

effort. She mentioned the Chamber breakfast on June 16 on the State of the Town. She also described the July 14 referendum, which is to accept grant funds to renovate portions of Town Hall. She stressed that this needed a simple majority vote, would not cost taxpayers any money, and votes will be cast only at the Community Center.

Town Council's Report

Councilor Montinieri discussed the June 17th meeting at Corpus Christi Church, sponsored by its Social Action Committee. The purpose is to discuss the smart growth movement and review the Metropatterns report. She recommended that anyone from EDIC interested attend. She also discussed the Conservation Commission's discussions about open space and how to best use property along the riverfront. One idea was a haunted hayride that would tie into the Scarecrows On Main Street program.

Town Planner's Report

Mr. Gillespie reviewed his monthly Town Council report on economic development activity. Work at Hughes Brothers, Main Street Creamery, Buy Rite Liquors, Cumberland Farms and Brooks is underway. Dolce Bakery appears to be doing well, and he has some discussions about the former Weight Watchers building and the Fun Zone. July 29 will be the public hearing about the new zoning regulations, and members were encouraged to attend. Mr. Gillespie mentioned that many people have expressed interest in the newly forming Design and Review Board.

Cindy Jacobs mentioned a meeting on the potential for biotech firms along the I-91 corridor; Peter said there could be a potential fit with the Progress Drive area, and he would share that information with the owner.

Planning and Zoning liaison report

Phil Knecht reported that he and Mr. Gillespie had toured Park Street in Hartford. This area is filled with thriving businesses funded by the Small Business Administration. Peter noted that its success is largely due to an active merchants association, and such a model might work well for Silas Deane Highway and/or the Berlin Turnpike. Mr. Knecht also mentioned that Lennox, Massachusetts offers its senior citizens property tax refunds in exchange for volunteer work at the schools and other town facilities. This program also exists in Rocky Hill.

Old Business

Mr. Gillespie stated the Silas Deane Highway Advisory Committee is setting up its first meeting. Getting everyone up and running to review the 1987 plan is the first order of business.

Cindy Jacobs stated she met with Andy Wizner of the Conservation Commission, and that Kathy Bagley keeps a database of open space. There needs to be coordination among this group, Conservation Commission, Wetlands and Tourism in order to develop a comprehensive agriculture strategy.

New Business

Frank Frago mentioned he is working on the Chamber's annual business survey, and plans to meet with Chris Lyons to discuss how it might change as a result of the business visitation program. Kate Mullen will also attend. Mr. Frago said the Town might host a Business After Hours sometime later this year, to further foster town/business relations.

Mr. Frago also took a moment to thank Tony Camilliere for his outstanding leadership and service to the EDIC. All members applauded his work and thanked him. Betty Rosania noted that the EDIC needs to continue its momentum by focusing on a few things, doing them well, and to that end should think about ways to streamline its work. She also suggested considering expansion of the EDIC to eleven members, perhaps including representatives of major business areas such as the Turnpike and the Silas Deane, and possibly changing the meeting time to make it more accessible to residents who work outside of town but have an interest. She also said any new members should fill areas of expertise we currently lack.

Adjournment

Mr. Camilliere asked for a motion to adjourn. It was made by Mr. Frago, seconded by Mr. Vining, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.