

Town of Wethersfield
Economic Development and Improvement Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 5, 2004

Members Present

Joe Cornelio, Frank Frago, Tom Grottke, Phil Knecht - P&Z liaison, Chris Lyons, Paul Montinieri. Also present were John Karangekis, Julie Montinieri, Bonnie Therrien, Peter Gillespie

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM by Chairperson Betty Rosania. She opened with brief remarks about starting on time, staying with the agenda during discussion and the determination to use everyone's valuable time wisely by limiting comments to the topic at hand. Each member, at the completion of the agenda, will be provided the opportunity to discuss/comment/share information as they so choose.

Minutes

The minutes were approved with the following corrections:

The minutes were moved by and seconded by Frank Frago. Vote was affirmative.

Chair Report

The opening of Bed Bath and Beyond went very well. Ms. Rosania urged all members to support the businesses by shopping in Town.

Marketing and Communications Subcommittee Report

Chris Lyons reported that the regular meeting of the subcommittee is scheduled for Friday, August 6, 2004. The subcommittee will discuss the next realtor push. Business visitations will resume when summer is over. The group is considering using the budgeted dollars for advertising featuring Wethersfield as a good place to do business.

Finance Subcommittee Report

Frank Frago reported that the meeting with the area banks to discuss participation in the loan program is scheduled for August 18, 2004 at 7:30 AM at the Country Club. State Legislator Paul Doyle will be invited. The plan is to not pitch dollars at the meeting but to discuss the program and to be more specific at follow up individual meetings. A Finance subcommittee is scheduled for August 17, 2004 in Ken Rizzio's office to discuss a brochure.

Development Subcommittee Report

Tom Grottke reported that a meeting was held on Monday to review the documentation prepared by the intern on the Silas Deane Highway. At the meeting, development ideas for the Silas Deane were discussed. Town Planner Peter Gillespie talked about the documentation and showed the map and photo that were prepared. The Silas Deane master plan targets the Town Center area and a more detailed look at the blocks between Church and Nott Streets and Nott Street and the Police Department was provided. Councilman Andy Adil pointed out that the area is a "hot" area for Council and citizens. The two areas make sense as there is a considerable amount of undeveloped land.

Chairperson Rosania applauds the vision; commenting that the southern end of town is coming along with Sterling Jewelers, Bed, Bath and Beyond, Starbucks, CVs and the Medical Building. It is logical to move to the center of town. Concern about the Silas Deane Committee is expressed. Will there be a product soon? Joe has met with the group and is willing to be more involved. The Silas Deane Committee is scheduled to make a report in September.

Mr. Gillespie commented that the Town is going in the same direction regarding the Silas Deane plans and suggested a joint meeting in September.

Mr. Knecht commented that this is the third year of effort and we need to focus on the many positives that have occurred. He further suggests that we have a physical tour to highlight the positives.

Chair Rosania redirects the discussion back on point and suggests revisiting Mr. Knecht's comments later.

Mr. Gillespie cautioned the group that the blocks targeted have significant development restrictions. Utilizing the map, he indicated the flood zone. The Wetlands Commission has indicated that the properties have never flooded, therefore further analysis is required to determine what the realistic development possibilities are.

Nott to Church, on the east side of the Silas Deane, affords great opportunities. North of Nott will be more challenging, perhaps commercial in the rear.

Joe Cornelio questioned how Beaver Brook flows.

Agriculture Business Cluster Subcommittee

Peter Gillespie reports that meetings are going to be set up the the USDA in the near future to discuss possible technical assistance.

Councilwoman Julie Montinieri reported that the Tourism Commission and Historical Society groups are looking for a marketing coordinator.

Chairwoman Rosania requested that the monthly report be issued earlier as well as agendas and minutes.

Director of Planning and Economic Development Report

Peter Gillespie reported:

- In the Wethersfield Shopping Center, Mila Fabric is closed, to be replaced by Strawberries.
- Mila is negotiating to buy across the street, the Absolute Mortgage property and Sherwin Williams. They will renovate the vacant building on that property and reopen.
- Interest has been expressed in 1000 Silas Deane Highway.
- 1030 Silas Deane Highway is vacant, they are looking for a restaurant.
- Office Depot is negotiating to go into the Goff Brook Shops.
- The Arrow Tool Building 61 Arrow Road is planning to be renovated.
- Hughes Brothers will start construction soon.
- Bob's Fruit Stand on the Berlin Tpke had a new building approved.
- An artist has expressed interest in moving into Old Wethersfield.
- A catering business is looking at Old Wethersfield.
- Developers are interested in putting together a 55+ development (Ridge Road site).
- Interviews are in process for a secretary.
- At the Zoning change public hearing on July 29, 2004 there was not real opposition.
- The Tourism Commission is selecting a consultant to assist with a plan.
- On Wednesday, September 29, 2004, at 5:30 PM a the Wethersfield Police Community Room, the EDIC will host an economic development summit featuring an information session and a panel discussion of dos and don'ts from communities that have been successful in putting together development and redevelopment programs.

Town Manager's Report

Town Manager Therrien reported that the State of Connecticut will be repaving the Silas Deane Highway. This summer they will pave from the Hartford/Wethersfield line to Nott Street. Next summer they will pave from Nott Street to Rocky Hill. Now is the time to plan any changes. With the addition of support staff in my office, I will be

available to participate more and work more closely with the Economic Development Director on key projects and activities.

Planning and Zoning Commission Liaison Report

Phil Knecht reported on the zoning regulation change public hearing. There were some specific questions raised that need to be addressed. Overall it was OK. We are on the road to getting the zoning regulations approved.

Old Business

Salute to Business

Chairperson Rosania posed the question of skipping a year of the annual business survey due to everything else that is going on. Frank Frago reported that the Chamber Board wants the survey done. Chris Lyons concurred that the survey should be done to maintain continuity. Tom Grottke remarked that it was a good measuring stick. Phil Knecht commented that it would be a shame to not do the survey.

Chairperson Rosania requested delaying the survey until Mr. Gillespie has secretarial help in place. Frank Frago added that the questions should be mailed shortly after Labor Day. Ms. Rosania asked if it could be delayed until two weeks after Labor Day. Town Manager Therrien commented that her office could handle the survey.

Chairperson Rosania requested a Salute to Business committee meeting date and further requested that the meeting be before or after the next EDIC meeting. The time is set for 11:00AM on September 9, 2004.

Chris Lyons asked what the feedback was from the Chamber of Commerce. Frank Frago commented that they asked if they could be participants, however they would like more time on the agenda than they had last year.

Peter Gillespie added that Councilman John Cascio and Carmella want to be at the meeting and on the subcommittee planning the event.

The Salute to Business is scheduled for December 9, 2004.

Chairperson Rosania questioned whether the EDIC should meet that day. It was noted that the December meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2004.

Frank Frago questioned whether the Keeney Center would be large enough if it were a joint event.

EDIC Ordinance changes

The proposed EDIC ordinance changes will be sent to Council at the next meeting.

New Business

Budget

Peter Gillespie handed out a copy of the adopted budget for the Economic Development Department.

The total budget is \$80,641 with \$12,500 earmarked for Tourism and \$68,141 for staff salaries (the secretary and grants administrator). That leaves \$28,141 for the commission to work with.

It was agreed that all would review the budget and discuss it at the next meeting. Frank Frago requested more detail.

Chairperson Rosania declared the agenda complete. She then called on each individual around the table to see if they have anything to add.

Julie Montinieri - The Metropatterns public forum is coming up on September 22.

Bonnie Therrien - It is a discussion about Wethersfield as a community at risk.

Chris Lyons - Expressed a concern about the article in today's paper.

Bonnie Therrien indicated that the Police would provide a bike patrol for the next two weeks.

Phil Knecht relayed that the Police in Hartford are concerned about the businesses and asked if the group should meet with the Wethersfield Police.

Betty Rosania suggested that we use caution and not blow the situation up.

John Karangekis added that it is the policy of the Police Department for officers to make note of concerns.

Bonnie Therrien added that there is a written brochure that explains things to do regarding safety prevention.

John Karangekis commented that it is the reputation of the WPD in the criminal community that they should stay out of Wethersfield, which has the lowest crime rate of the towns around Hartford.

Motion was made and passed to adjourn at 1:12 PM.