

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES
August 7, 2003
Town Manager's Conference Room

Chairman Anthony Camilliere called the meeting to order at 12:10 pm. Those in attendance were Betty Rosania, John Breglio, Frank Frago, Jon Vining, Thomas Grottke, and Kenneth Rizzio. Also in attendance was Mayor Kitch Breen Czernicki, Phil Knecht, and Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager.

The Chairman asked for volunteers to attend the Strategic Plan Update Meeting on August 25th. Betty Rosania, Ken Rizzo, John Breglio and Jon Vining agreed to represent the Commission. The Chairman also asked for volunteers to attend the Plan of Conservation and Development Update meeting on September 22nd. Tom Grottke, Betty Rosania, Frank Frago and Ken Rizzo volunteered to go to this to represent the Commission.

The Commission discussed having the Economic Development Summit on either October 8th or October 15th with perhaps a light supper. The date will be determined when the new Planner begins work. This will be hosted by the Commission.

The next Commission meeting will be September 11, 2003 at The Tavern. The Cornfest will be discussed at the next meeting.

The Chairman explained the reason for this special meeting was to set solid goals for the Commission. This is the only item on the agenda.

Tom Grottke felt the top goals are to see a significant increase in marketing to businesses to attract them to Wethersfield; to find out what the potential commercial properties and availability is in Town; to start extensive external marketing; and to develop a higher and better use for the Wethersfield Shopping Center.

Bonnie Therrien felt that in order for the Commission to move forward there must be sub-committees that meet and develop plans in between each Commission meeting so that the group is not meeting and taking action only once per month. Once the sub-committees were established, they would then report out to the full Commission each month.

Betty Rosania felt that the Silas Deane sub committee should be one of the sub groups under the Commission. Betty agreed with Bonnie that we cannot get enough done only meeting 1 1/2 hours per month.

Thomas Grottke felt the most important thing that must be done is to develop a list of vacancies in Town, along with available land and the redevelopment potential of the Town. This must be the #1 goal before we can accomplish anything else.

Phil Knecht asked if anyone in Town, right now, has redevelopment authority? Bonnie said no. This Commission could have the potential to be given that authority but they do not have it as of yet.

Thomas Grottke also said that a tax incentive policy must be a second top goal. The Chairman said that the Town was definitely behind on getting this done and the new Planner must tackle this quickly and have the Council take action as soon as possible. John Breglio said that the Commission had already approved the incentive so we don't need this as a goal.

Betty Rosania felt that a member of EDIC should go to each Council meeting and speak about what the EDIC is doing. It is important that the goals are communicated to the public and the Council.

Thomas Grottke felt that community education should be a goal. It is important that EDIC educates the public that we must grow the tax base in order to pay for our current services. Perhaps EDIC could go on to the Public Access channel and discuss the goals.

Bonnie Therrien felt that having a realtor's breakfast would acquaint the realtors with what the Town can offer them and allow for a general discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the Town.

John Breglio summarized that is sounded like the top 3 goals were: #1 - Developing an available property list inventory and inventory of potential development areas (Tom Grottke, Phil Knecht, Frank Frago and Jon Vining); #2 - Financial Growths - (Frank Frago and Ken Rizzio); #3 - Communication and Marketing - (John Breglio and Tony Camilliere).

Thomas Grottke felt that we should have a meeting as separate groups with property developers, land owners and real estate agents. Frank Frago felt we should invite a property developer to come to each of our meetings to start talking about what Wethersfield offers. Tom felt that they are very busy, and it would probably be better to meet at their office. Ken Rizzio said that landowners are key to economic development in Town. Tom also felt that we should be looking at things on a regional basis. What is our image to others and how can we fit into the future of the region?

The Mayor felt that we have to show our interest in being a part of the regional growth of this part of Connecticut. It is important that EDIC is represented at the table in regional planning.

Jon Vining felt that our goals need to be put on the Town's web site and advertise them constantly, especially on public TV. He also felt that tourism is a key part of economic development. Betty felt that the names of the EDIC members should be put on all advertisements. The Chairman felt that EDIC needs to have a liaison to the Tourism Commission.

It was suggested that at the next meeting, the new members of EDIC and those not in attendance would be able to volunteer for the 3 committees and then work could begin in earnest.

Betty Rosania said that positive publicity will be most important for the Commission at their first appearance at a Council Meeting.

A motion was made by Frank Frago to adjourn the meeting at 1:43 pm; seconded by Betty Rosania. The vote was unanimous.