



**Economic Development Commission
Monday, January 3, 2011
Town of Windham Meeting Room
Meeting Minutes**

Commission Members present: Bill Hettinger, Bob Horrocks, Victor Funderburk

Commission Members absent: Eric Crowley

Town Staff: James Finger, Town Planner, Sharon Vernon, recording secretary

Call to order: Bill Hettinger called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm

Citizens & Delegations:

None

Review/Approval of Minutes:

Bob Horrocks made a motion to accept the amended meeting minutes of December 6, 2010 with 2 corrections. Victor Funderburk seconded the motion. All members present were in favor, motion carried. (Original minutes of the last meeting were revised with the noted corrections.)

Chairman's Report & Commission member comments:

Bill Hettinger reported that on December 7th he received a copy of a letter of resignation from Ceaser Castro, addressed to the Mayor and Town Manager, therefore we need to fill his position on the EDC commission as well as the other two commission members.

Bill stated that he spoke to Patrick Schooley the developer who is doing the Frog Bridge apartments and he indicated to him that he was interested in doing more development in the town such as renovating some old buildings. Bill replied that we should set up a meeting with

him to see if we can help to facilitate any possible economic development projects.

Bill commented that he received a general letter originally from the Mayor's office from Tom Ford stating that he had some ideas for the Whitewater Park Project and some riverfront development. Bill added that the developer said he would contact us when he was ready. Bill stated that he also heard from two other developers on the first business day of the year, one regarding buying buildings in town to renovate and the other interested in riverfront property as well as the Mill#4 site. Some discussion followed on following up with possible developers.

Bill stated that he has a list of short-term recommendations from CEDAS for Governor Malloy & State Legislature to support economic development. Bill commented that he thought there were a couple of items on the list that he found interesting - One item on the list was to allow state employees to go out of state to attract and recruit new businesses, the other item was to reinstate regional field officers from DECD for the towns. Bill mentioned that we used to have Jerry Morrison as our field representative at one time which was very helpful for the town. Bill passed out the list to the EDC members to review.

Bill commented that the town manager, Neil Beets is asking James Finger and Matt Vertefeuille to come up with a development check list that would identify the major issues that have to be addressed to the town for zoning approval. Bill added that this goes back to the "business friendly" commitment from the EDC. James Finger and Bill Hettinger both agreed that they hope that this development checklist will help to streamline the approval process for new businesses and developers.

There was major discussion on the ATD ordinance and ATD's in general. Bill commented that if we are trying to recruit a new "ATD" business into town and then support the ordinance, it could be counter-productive to economic development. There was also further discussion on banning the use on private property, enforcing the registration process of ATD's and the illegal use of ATD's.

Bill stated that he attended a presentation at Three Rivers Community College on December 10th called "Sowing and Growing" your community and your business. The first presentation was from Will Lambe from the University of North Carolina, he wrote a book called "Small Towns, Big Ideas"

Bill commented that his first program was located in Ord, Nebraska where they created an entrepreneurship program in the high school and middle school. They also created a nine month leadership program where they bring past, present, and future leaders together for discussion.

Bill stated that the other program is located in Fairfield, Iowa. Bill added that it is a home of a Krishna University. They have 55 restaurants, a vibrant downtown, coffee shops, galleries and there are very strong entrepreneurship programs run by the Chamber of Commerce. They offer workshops, mentorship, relocation program, revolving loan fund, and meeting space. There is also access to an angel investor network. They are basically creating the environment for entrepreneurship.

Bill stated that the other program is located in Reynolds, Indiana. They have 550 people and 150,000 pigs and they want to become bio-town USA and be the first energy independent town in the country. Their idea is to turn the pig output into methane and fertilizer etc. They also run sewage into the recycling process. Bill commented that he noted that he wondered if there was something that the Willimantic Waste Company might have to use as a power generation source?

Bill commented that the other college town that he wanted to mention was Davidson, North Carolina. They did a revenue sharing deal with other towns and created an industrial park.

Bill also mentioned that there was a presentation from Chris Gibbons who is the economic development director for Littleton, Colorado and the founder of the term "economic gardening". The economic gardening message is to stop attracting companies, and to grow them instead. Stop hunting, start gardening. Bill added that they do not give any incentives to any businesses for attraction or retention, all their money is invested in their community. They try to grow businesses locally. Littleton has had very impressive results: 23% population growth, doubled in number of jobs, to 30,000 jobs now, tripled the sales tax take.

Further discussion followed on the presentation and a copy of Bill's notes will be added with the minutes.

There was some discussion on YourEconomy.org which is a business census containing more than 24 million active establishments providing detailed information about the performance of businesses from a local to a national perspective.

There was also discussion on encouraging incubators and co-ops.

There was major discussion on new businesses who don't have a clue on the beginning steps of starting their business as well as being able to retain their business. It was agreed that we need to educate people about agencies that may be able to help them, such as the Northeast Alliance, Chamber of Commerce, SBA., Smart Start, CEDF, etc.

Bob Horrocks stated that most businesses do not have the time to go to workshops that may be of assistance to them. He also added that the agencies should do more outreach.

It was also brought up that we should have members from the EDC that will visit the Main Street businesses to see if they need any assistance. Kay Haskell and Ceaser Castro had good communication with the downtown businesses as well as George Hernandez formerly from SAMA who worked closely with the downtown businesses, we need to replace these people. Bill Hettinger stated that is one of the reasons why he would like to partner with Thread City because they have a lot of downtown business owners as members.

James Finger and Sharon Vernon spoke about having to baby-step through the whole process with some new businesses. Sharon spoke briefly about the "Jump Start" business assistance program that was offered by the economic development office, and she commented that even though the program no longer exists, businesses can still get assistance from the state's Smart Start program and go online to CT-Clic.com. Bill also stated that the Chamber of Commerce will also help new businesses.

Some discussion followed on possibly starting a business class at QVCC. Bill commented that he didn't think we would be able to get enough people to attend.

Bill stated that the Chamber of Commerce runs a "start your business" class. He commented that maybe we could do a "follow-up" on the people that attended the class.

More discussion followed on town-owned properties, planning & zoning issues and the amount of buildings downtown that are in dire need of repair.

It was also brought up that the building data base on the Town of Windham website needs to be updated. James Finger stated that Kay

Haskell was working on that before she moved and that he hopes to get some assistance to update this. Some discussion followed on this.

Victor Funderburk also stated that the EDC needs to work on recruiting new members for the commission.

Citizens & Delegations:

None

Adjournment:

Victor Funderburk made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bob Horrocks seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sharon Vernon