



**Economic Development Commission  
Monday, December 6, 2010  
Town of Windham Meeting Room  
Meeting Minutes**

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

**Commission Members absent:** George Buch, Eric Crowley & Ceaser Castro

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

**Call to order:** Bill Hettinger called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm

**Citizens & Delegations:**

None

**Review/Approval of Minutes:**

*Victor Funderburk made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of November 1, 2010. Bob Horrocks seconded the motion. All members present were in favor, motion carried.*

**Chairman's Report & Commission member comments:**

Bill Hettinger reported that there was a forum/seminar conference on "Sowing and Growing" your community and your business. The event will be held at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich, CT this Friday from 8-3:30 pm, Bill stated that there would be a couple of National speakers on economic gardening as well as local community development strategies. Bill added that it would cost \$60 for the commission and asked if anyone was interested in attending.

Bill stated that Dale Kroop, Director of Economic & Community Development in Hamden & President of CEDAS conference gave a presentation at the "Dollars for Dirt" conference awhile back on the remediation of some buildings they did with EPA dollars, and Bill stated that he would like to follow up on that to see what programs they used, how it was structured etc. Bill added that he would like to be able to get some Town of Windham properties online.

Bill also stated that Dale sent him a CEDAS membership form which the membership dues are usually \$100 a member but for EDC's it would only be \$25 a member or \$100 for the whole commission. Bill asked if anyone was interested in joining CEDAS.

Bill commented that Susan Johnson is working to find money for remedial work on the Mill #4 site, she has offered to come and meet with the EDC to see if there is anything that we would like her to propose to the legislation session. Some discussion followed on this subject.

Bill stated that he received a letter of resignation from George Buch. George indicated that he wanted to be able to devote more time working with the Thread City Development Corporation and he thanked the commission members for their work & dedication.

Bill commented that he met with Neal Beets & Ernie Eldredge to discuss EDC membership and replacing Kay Haskell on the EDC. Bill stated to them that he thought that the EDC could work more effectively if we split into sub-committees and would like to be able to increase the EDC to 7 members with 2 alternates. Neal seemed to be in favor of this idea at the meeting, but this will have to be brought up at a town council meeting and be voted on. Bill also brought up the idea of possibly opening it up to non-resident stakeholders (people who own businesses or property in town but do not live here). Bill added that this would be more complicated because of the town charter and he has not heard back yet on this idea.

Bill commented that Neal Beets sent him a page of Economic Development Ideas, most of these were covered at their meeting, on this document he mentioned that 1) the EDC should provide an annual Mission Statement for the EDC, changes to the Town website, business improvement grants, tax abatements or other incentives and to write and monitor a community revitalization strategy (already completed in June, 2009, check on the status with DECD) 2) Knowledge Sharing & Leads: We spoke about partnering with stakeholder agencies such as: CERC, other EDC's, CT Main Street, CEDF, commercial real estate agents & bankers, Chamber of Commerce, N.E. Economic Alliance, Windham Mills, PZC, major businesses, UCONN & ECSU. 3) Areas of Town: a. Downtown: DeVivo properties, Hurley Building, Nassif Building, downtown parking garage, ECSU master plan, Whitewater b. Route 6 Corridor: Tony Lent c. Route 32 Corridor: Rogers building, Giant Vac & Brookside.

Bill commented that Generations is moving out of the old Stop & Shop building, they are building a new site on Valley St. He also stated that there was an open house/tour of 1315 Main Street, the main building is 48K sq. ft., the total parcel size is 7 + acres, Bill passed out a fact sheet with other important information about the site. He stated that this site could be used for many different uses. Bill also passed around an article from the Norwich Bulletin which reported the different uses such as cooperative store fronts,

start-up businesses, senior center, etc. Discussion followed on this subject and James Finger went into more detail about the open house/tour that he attended at this site. Bill Hettinger also stated that he would like the EDC to start a sub-committee on a small business incubator program to come up with ways of facilitating growth of new businesses. Victor Funderburk offered to call Thorton's Market in North Hampton, CT to find out about their experiences.

James stated that he would contact the state about getting a list of local businesses and the fee would be \$50.

*Victor Funderburk made a motion that James Finger pay the fee of \$50 to the State of CT to purchase a list of the town's local businesses, Bob Horrocks seconded the motion, all members present were in favor.*

Bill passed out an article from the New York Times, the headline of the article was "New London Schools to brokers: Get to know Us" this article was to encourage real estate agents to visit the schools so that they can see that the schools are not bad as they were portrayed. Bill asked the EDC if anyone knew how to get this article out to our local schools, James Finger offered to send it the Superintendent of Windham Schools. Minor discussion followed on this article.

Bill also passed out a news article from the Wall Street Journal titled "Start-up programs Find Niche". Bill stated that the article spoke about a program in 2008 called "Chicago Fashion Incubator" that helped launch some businesses. Bill added that the article also spoke about general information regarding business incubator programs designed to support early-stage companies. Some discussion followed.

James Finger spoke some on the value of putting properties on CERC's Quick Tracks program. James stated that he contacted several realtors and property owners and the only response that he received back was the property questionnaire on 4 & 6 Industrial park Drive. James added that David Mieczynski would like the town to do the certification for them. James also spoke some on CERC's requirements for the SiteFinder & QuickTracks program and stated that he would follow-up on setting up an informational session with realtors, a tour with the Mills, United Abrasives and also South Windham. Bill commented with the town budget issues he felt that we couldn't afford the SiteFinder program at this time. Bill suggested that the EDC try to assist some of the Town's property owners/realtors on marketing their sites in whatever other ways that we can.

#### **Update Member's areas of Interest:**

Victor Funderburk spoke about the meetings that he has been attending at the Windham Arts Collaborative. He stated that state officials has supplied WAC with a consultant and it is going to be re-organized into an LAA which

will focus on a local area art agency, they will be revising their by-laws etc. Victor added that this has been very successful in other communities to be run on a low budget as a coordinating function with other arts organizations. The state will be giving them a grant and they will be working with other organizations to match that grant money and to provide a service. Victor stated that he attended some workshops on how to raise matching grant money for promoting the arts, hopefully this will be of some assistance. WAC has lost their building and are talking to Neal Beets to see if there is any space available in the town hall building. Victor hopes that the EDC can assist them in getting this LAA established. Victor added that the state would like to see Windham/Willimantic as the regional center since we are in a primary location. Victor also stated that the Thread City Development Corporation has new officers and they have a desire to start new to rebuild within the Arts District. Some discussion followed. (a copy of the last TCDC meeting minutes were passed out)

Bill Hettinger led a discussion regarding the CDBG pool of money (about \$16,000) that was returned to the town a couple of years ago for repayment of housing rehab loans etc. He stated that he spoke to Neal Beets about possibly having some of that money allocated to the EDC for economic development projects. Bill added that the use of this money has to fall into the CDBG guidelines, and he stated that he hoped that we could use some of this money for façade repairs on small business buildings and other similar economic development projects.

Bill also spoke about putting up small street signs that lead to small businesses, especially for the businesses that were located on side streets. Minor discussion followed.

#### **Downtown sub-committees:**

Bill commented that there were not enough members to discuss this subject and we would post pone the discussion for another meeting.

#### **EDC objectives and direction:**

Bill suggested that we advocate for buying and supporting local businesses. Some discussion followed on this subject and also if it was legal for us to ask a major contractor to purchase their supplies locally.

Bill asked the commission if they would brainstorm on this concept over the next couple of months and discuss it then.

#### **New Business:**

James Finger discussed the meeting from last Tuesday with the Central Rail Corridor in New London. The round table discussion focused on support of establishing a passenger rail line from New London up to Bratellbro. Some

discussion followed on the lack of funding and the need for support and voices to help the rail line expansion and there was also discussion on rail lines to the colleges and the casinos.

Bob Horrocks suggested that the EDC draft a letter & resolution in support of the rail line. Bill Hettinger and James Finger agreed to put together a draft letter and a resolution.

James Finger commented that the town's downtown database is out of date and needs to be revised. Bill stated that he will get together with him to work on that.

**EDC meeting dates for 2011:**

Bill Hettinger suggested that we should hold our EDC meetings on the first Monday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Windham Town hall until further notice. *Victor Funderburk made a motion that the EDC hold their meetings on the first Monday of the month at 7:00 pm, Bob Horrocks seconded it, all present members agreed, motion carried.*

**Citizens & Delegations:**

None

**Adjournment:**

*Bob Horrocks made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Victor Funderburk seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.*

*Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sharon Vernon*