



**Economic Development Commission  
Monday, April 4, 2011  
Town of Windham Meeting Room  
Meeting Minutes**

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

**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 7:30 pm

**Citizens & Delegations:**

Tom DeVivo attended the EDC meeting to give us a brief presentation on a potential Industrial Park project. Tom stated back in 2006 Ted Montgomery and himself went to Mike Paulhus (past First Selectman) to develop their industrial park down in South Windham. Tom passed out a copy of the original memo stating the costs etc. Tom also added that this is a project where we actually already own the property (15 acres) so we would control the project and it would be very doable. Tom also stated that many of the projects that we have on our agenda we don't own. He commented that he met with the Governor last Wednesday and told him that we had 15 acres of land; the Governor stated that he wants to bring in five businesses with 200 employees each into Connecticut, that also includes many incentives. Tom stated that it would be great to go to the State of Connecticut and tell him that we have 15 acres of land that they could put that business on. Tom showed the EDC the zoning map of Windham and added that this property has been clearance specifically for economic development.

There was further discussion on: water line, access to railroad track, landfill, flat gravel, stone, DECD, etc.

Tom passed out copies of zoning maps showing where we could have walking trails along the Shetucket River. Some discussion followed.

Tom stated that we should try to get some CDGB money to help with the expense of the water line.

Bob Horrocks asked what the zoning is on that property, James Finger replied that the zoning is M-2.

Bill Hettinger commented that the biggest expense is getting the utilities in there, paving the roads, etc. Tom suggested that the EDC contact the Mayor to set up a meeting with the Governor.

Some discussion followed on Franklin Mushroom Farm. Tom stated that it does not have city water and the water at Franklin Mushroom Farm is high in sulphur, it was okay to grow mushrooms, but it's not good as city water.

Tom mentioned that Capitol Garage is expanding, and Diggins Garage is moving. Tom stated that they are developing the Loundsberry property on Route 32, trying to change it back to an industrial site, from there we will take part of it as a retail section, 2.75 acres will stay zoned as C-2 and may change to M-4.

Tom gave a brief update on the properties they bought on Main Street. He stated they still have not received the title to the Nathan Hale yet. They met with CHFA on tearing down the YMCA, we are not in a rush, that building it's definitely slated for demolition, and the building cannot be saved. Tom commented that they are still in negotiations with the plans of the buildings; they have not spent any money on site plan development. Minor discussion followed on the town parking garage and how crucial parking is for the town.

#### **Review & Approval of minutes:**

Victor Funderburk made a motion to accept the minutes of March 7th, Bob Horrocks seconded it, members present approved.

#### **Update on Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ)- Jana Butts:**

Jan Butts stated that there are 3 things she wants to discuss with the EDC: 1) invite the EDC members to upcoming workshops on the Incentive Housing Zones, 2) Discuss incentives that the EDC wants to recommend as part of the IHZ. 3) Present a preliminary draft of the marketing kit to help market the IHZ.

Jana passed out a flier of the IHZ forums "Will Housing Revitalize Main Street" These forums will be held on 979 Main Street at the Windham Town Hall Auditorium, (refreshments provided).

**Saturday April 23, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.**

The first forum topic is: Where should Incentive Housing be located?

**Saturday May 28, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.**

The second forum topic is: What should Incentive Housing look like?

High quality, workforce housing will:

- Increase pedestrian activity
- Support businesses
- Preserve historic structures
- Increase safety
- Revitalize vacant properties

The logo is HomeConnecticut. For more info, visit [www.wincog.org/ihz](http://www.wincog.org/ihz)

Jana discussed the Built-in Incentives for Developers set by the State.

- IHZ must be consistent with the State, Regional & Local Plans of Conservation & Development. *Incentive: ensures project is eligible for state funding.*
- IHZ must be in locations with public water & sewer. *Incentive: Up-front costs for utilities are significantly lower.*
- Minimum densities: 6 units per acre for single family, 10 units per acre for duplex or townhouse, 20 units per acre for multifamily units. *Incentive: While these densities are currently allowed by special permit, these minimum densities mean that the density allowed by zoning is not prohibitive.*
- At least 20% of the housing units within such zones must be affordable. Meaning housing costs may not exceed 30% of household annual income for household earnings, 80% of the area median income. *Incentive: NONE*
- Not allowed by special permit. No additional conditions may be applied. If it meets the Zoning Regulations, it must be approved. *Incentive: Example of "stream-lined" permitting with a significant reduction of risk for developer.*

Jana came up with a short list of tax abatements for IHZ:

**Potential Municipal Tax Abatements for Incentive Housing**

Tax abatements could be considered for IHZ development proposals that meet all of the following criteria:

- 1) Highly visible location-subject property has frontage on a road that has at least 10,000 vehicles Average Daily Traffic.
- 2) Transit Oriented- subject property is within an 800' radius of WRTD City Bus stops.

- 3) Area of blight, neglect, Abandonment- subject property has been vacant for at least two years.

Discussion followed on the draft market kit.

James Finger encouraged EDC members to attend & participate in the upcoming IHZ forums.

Bill Hettinger suggested that we put the Incentive Housing Zone on our agenda so we can make a recommendation to the Town Council in favor of the IHZ when the time is appropriate. (approximately June)

### **Chairman's Report:**

Bill Hettinger stated Victor and he met between now and the last meeting to discuss the Arts, Culture and Tourism District and how to make it happen.

- 1) Vision: To develop Windham as a regional center for arts, culture & tourism.
- 2) To use arts, culture & Tourism as the impetus for the redevelopment of downtown.

### What Has to Happen?

In order to make this vision a reality, the idea must be promoted within the community, and people from the art community and the business community must come together in support of the vision. Specifically:

1. There needs to be outreach to the arts community and to business community.
2. The vision needs to be articulated to the community.
3. People need to buy in to the vision. To form a community vision, it may be necessary for one or more of the non-profit groups to obtain some grant funds and bring in speakers and holding visioning sessions.
4. To implement the vision, a series of action steps may need to be identified, and responsibility for completing the action steps assigned to organizations or individuals.

### Role of the EDC

- a. Facilitate the start of the process by reaching out to community and business organizations.
- b. Form a subcommittee of the EDC with responsibility the outreach and facilitation.

c. Communicate the vision to town boards/commissions/commit and staff so these groups are aware of the community vision when making decisions.

d. Work with town staff and the town council to create signage to promote Windham as an arts, culture and tourism destination, and to identify and provide directions to individual attractions (see Sign Program below).

e. Suggest revisions as necessary to town's existing Arts and Entertainment tax abatement programs to help facilitate the arts, culture and tourism objective (see Tax Abatement Program below).

### **Sign Program**

1. Create a sign program on Main Street to point to businesses along side streets. (A potential model is the Killingly program)

2. Create a sign program designed to direct visitors to the town's arts, culture and tourist attractions. (A potential model is Coventry)

3. Have town staff work with DOT to create signs at the key intersections of the roads leading to downtown directing visitors to the historic downtown and arts and entertainment district.

Bill mentioned that there were some example sign photos in our packets from other towns.

### **Main Street Crosswalks**

Work with town and state staff to create additional crosswalks on Main Street to enhance access to businesses on both sides of Main Street from parking areas.

### **Business Friendly Town**

Identify and suggest changes as necessary to town regulations and processes to make doing business with the town and in town as friendly as possible.

### **Tax Abatement Policy**

Work with the town manager, tax assessor, and town planner/economic development staff to develop a draft tax abatement policy for the town.

"On the one hand, we want to incent economic development. On the other hand, we don't want to give away the store or be unfair and uneven in how we handle such requests."

The Town Assessor added that town taxes should be current.

*Victor Funderburk made a motion that the EDC adopt this "2011 Initiatives" Plan, Bob Horrocks seconded it, all members present were in favor.*

There was some discussion on the developer meetings/discussions with the South Windham Factory Tour (Giant Vac)

It was also discussed that the EDC meet with DECD to talk about the CT Small Cities Program for economic development funding.

It was agreed by all present EDC members that due to time the discussion on tax abatement guidelines will be tabled for another meeting.

### **New Business:**

James Finger announced that Bill Anderson will be joining the EDC. The matter will be going to the town council meeting tomorrow night.

James announced that the town applied for a grant called the "Vibrant Communities through the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation"

Bill also heard that the post office is consolidating. The mail processing will all be done out of the Willimantic Office, which means there will be more truck traffic, minor discussion followed.

Some discussion followed on CERC and how expensive it is to join.

Bill suggested that we contact DECD regarding the CRS plan. And if they don't like the plan the way we did it, tell us and we will change it.

Bill also stated that CDBG funding is about to drop to almost nothing (almost 4 ½ Million less)

**Citizens & Delegations:** None

**Adjournment:** *Victor Funderburk made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bob Horrocks Hettinger seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:55 pm.*

*Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sharon Vernon*