



**Economic Development Commission  
Monday, July 11, 2011  
Town of Windham Meeting Room  
Special Meeting Minutes**

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

**Commission Members absent:** Bill Anderson, Eric Crowley

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

**Call to order:** Chairman Bill Hettinger called the meeting to order at 7:41 PM

**Citizens & Delegations:**

None

**Review & Approval of minutes:**

Bob Horrocks made a motion to accept the EDC minutes of June 6<sup>th</sup>. Victor Funderburk seconded the motion, and all members present approved.

**Old Business:**

**Discussion of tax abatement guidelines:**

James Finger explained that there is a lot of debate over tax incentives on whether they actually promote economic development or is it just a "give away". James added that the consensus is that they do not promote economic development unless there was competition and equal opportunity between two similar entities.

The Chairman stated that at the last meeting, Bill Anderson took on the project of looking at our "tax abatement" guidelines. He said they will be meeting on Friday to go over his work and will discuss the materials at a future EDC meeting. The Chairman added that he spoke to the Town Assessor last week and was told that Manufacturers are eligible for an 80%

personal property tax abatement on new machinery because we are a distressed community. Bill commented that this may be beneficial to the South Windham factory building (Giant Vac). James agreed, and said that Giant Vac had taken advantage of this tax credit in the past. Some discussion followed on what may be eligible for this tax abatement.

James Finger urged the EDC to review the Town Attorney's memo on State Statutes authorizing economic development efforts by cities and towns. James stated that one of the items relating to Negotiated assessments is what the town used for the Windham Hospital expansion project. James added that recently the Town has learned that the State gave the hospital 8.3 Million in bonding to build the medical facility. So now, the town is not sure if the Hospital will need the tax abatement.

The Chairman asked James if the third item in Section 10 of the Code of Ordinances relating to the 'Rehabilitation area' applied to the whole town. James confirmed that - yes, the whole town is considered the rehabilitation area according to the Ordinance, and maybe the Commission needs to examine that point.

James also addressed the item on Economic Development bodies. This statute authorizes a town to establish various economic development entities to foster economic development - such as the Windham Community Redevelopment Agency that was dissolved in 1998. James added that the Town used this statute to set up a Municipal Development Agency for acquisition of the Windham Mills Project. Some discussion followed on brownfields, the Mill #4 site, and the fact that Rep. Susan Johnson is trying to secure funding to clean up the mill site.

### **Chair Report:**

Bill Hettinger reported that Paula Stahl was present at the last EDC meeting and gave us an update on the various revisions to the zoning regulations. The Chairman added that there was a public hearing on these held on June 23<sup>rd</sup> and the next one will be on Thursday, July 14<sup>th</sup>. The Chairman explained that the zoning changes for downtown would allow for apartments on the upper floors of the buildings without having to go through a hearing. The Chairman commented that the PZC was looking at various caveats to put in their regulations giving preference to buildings built prior to 1945, but this has caused some problems for a few people - such as the DeVivos who now own 3 buildings downtown. Their concern is that if some of these buildings need to be demolished, then they would like to be exempt from this new regulation.

James explained that the PZC resolved this issue. He added that all of these changes are online at the [Windham Planning Commission](#) web page.

Bill Hettinger stated that the second public hearing was on parking regulations. The Chairman replied that personally he thought that this hearing went very well, and that the objections that people had were very technical. James stated that they closed that hearing but tabled the action until the following meeting.

The Chairman commented that the 3<sup>rd</sup> item on their agenda was rezoning the North Windham area along Northridge Drive including Wal-Mart, & Home Depot side of the street up to the Tractor Supply Store. He said that also went well except for the parcel in back that apparently was going to be zoned commercial, but the property owner said they felt that it seemed best to leave it residential - based on audience comments (and it was abutting up to the Joshua Trust land).

The Chairman stated that James Finger & Matt Vertefeuille did a lot of work getting everything up to speed, revising all of the documents etc. during the meeting. The Chairman added that that he thought that at this upcoming meeting they will probably close the public hearings, and the PZC will have a good set of new zoning regulations for the EDC to push. Then we will have opened up a "business friendly" area of the Downtown and North Windham.

The Chairman Hettinger then opened a discussion on the Tin Tsin property (aka Chapman Block). He said he had received an email the previous week from Neal Beets, the Town Manager, inquiring on the status of the Tin Tsin site. The Chairman commented that the Town demolished the Tin Tsin building, and the site has been vacant for about ten years or so. The Town still owns the site. The Chairman added that back in 2004 when the Downtown Advisory Committee met, their report recommended that the site remain vacant due to all of the discussion about the White Water Park, and they planned to have activity along the river. The Downtown Advisory Committee recommended that the Town save the site as a 'Gateway' to the White Water River Park.

The Chairman also stated that when the Board of Selectmen designated Frog Prince as preferred developer, the Downtown Advisory Committee recommended that the Tin Tsin site not be given to Frog Prince - but be held back to be used as a Gateway to the park.

The Chairman explained that he was on the Downtown Advisory Committee, and back then, he agreed that they should keep the site vacant because it

would make a great entrance to the park. He added that now he would like the EDC to discuss possible uses for this site.

Victor Funderburk stated that he thought it was a mistake to save the site when there was no good action plan for the White Water Park.

Bob Horrocks added that Joan Slowick's sketch for the Gateway to the park was very nice, but he didn't think it was feasible. Bob agreed with Victor that he didn't think the site should be saved for this purpose, because it might not happen. He was in favor of letting someone develop it.

The Chairman repeated that the question posed by the Town Manager, Neal Beets is "what do you recommend doing with the Tin Tsin lot".

Bob Horrocks suggested that we try to develop it. Victor Funderburk suggested that we bring the question to the public and try to get ideas on what they think would be best for that site and he said that this would also generate interest on the parcel. Victor also stated that we need to attract new developers to our town.

The Chairman stated that there are three issues are:

- 1) What is going on with Whitewater?
- 2) Have a community discussion on the matter, or
- 3) Make it available for development.

The Chairman added that he would summarize their discussion and get it back to Neal Beets.

James Finger said that he is working on a grant with the ACCESS Agency, and the grant is to help get the citizens more involved in decision making for the town especially those that are under-represented - such as the Hispanic community.

James also reported that with the new zoning regulations, the Planning & Zoning Commission does not want to see a single story building in the Downtown on Main Street. Some discussion followed on this, asking why not.

The Chairman spoke about the "Developer Days" that Ted Montgomery held when he was the Economic Development Director. The Chairman said that unfortunately - because of the economy, there hasn't been any positive results. He added that maybe with our new & improved zoning regulations this would make our downtown a lot more attractive for development.

The Chairman commented that with our zoning changes, tax abatement guidelines sorted out and good advertisement for both – that - Here is our marketing package! Then once that's in place the next step is outreach. Further discussion followed.

**Other reports/correspondence/announcements/activities:**

The Chairman stated that last Tuesday he met with the Mayor, Town Manager, Town Engineer, Town Planner, Zoning Officer & someone from Water Department (Jim Hooper) regarding the South Windham Industrial Park. He then gave an update on site:

It has 1-2 years left as a gravel pit,  
It's zoned M-2 Industrial,  
It has a private rail crossing,  
We have lights but not gates.  
There is potential for 4 lots  
The sewer runs as far as IGA – which is 3-4 miles up the road.  
A 12 inch water pipe runs to the site.

The water is on the Route 32 side of the tracks – and this is a \$50,000 engineering problem, but is pretty straight forward.

It's too expensive to put in sewer & would violate the plan of development to extend it down that far away. So any development there would have to put in a septic system. The rough estimate would be about a half a Million dollars to extend the road part way in and go to the right; or let the developer finish the road & water line extension. The Town would not want to be in the development business, so we would put out an RFP. We need to know the demand for industrial parks etc. And, it would be good to know how much property taxes & jobs this would generate. The Chairman said he would contact Tom Marano of N.E. Utilities on the marketing search. Some discussion followed.

The Chairman asked Victor to give an update on the Arts & Entertainment sub-committee. Victor replied that they haven't had a chance to hold a meeting yet because he has been too busy with other meetings.

**New Business:**

James Finger announced that the Town would like to apply for a grant to the Orton Family Foundation for a Heart and Soul Grant project, and are seeking an endorsement from the EDC for the Town's proposal. Chairman Hettinger spoke of the letter of support template that James passed out earlier in the

meeting, as well as the letter of support he received from the ACCESS Agency. James stated that the support letter describes that the town is looking to apply for a \$100,000 grant and also states why the ACCESS Agency supports the grant. The agency can partner with the town in the following ways:

- Act as the Lead Agency to ensure the grant results are achieved.
- Facilitate an ongoing, results-focused community dialogue process among & between diverse stakeholders.
- Promote meeting place to hold the community dialogues and forums.
- Provide staff assistance with fundraising to secure the required cash match.
- Distribute information on the project to our customers (i.e. flyers/brochures in waiting room) & project promotion on website.

*After some discussion among the EDC members, Bob Horrocks made a motion that the EDC write a letter to Neal Beets recommending that the Town of Windham apply for the Orton Foundation, Heart & Soul Grant. Victor Funderburk seconded the motion, all members present approved.*

The Chairman said he would write up the endorsement letter and get it to Neal Beets as soon as possible.

James Finger said that the Town was surprised to learn that the State announced that on July 5<sup>th</sup> we were given a year's extension on our IHZ (Incentive Housing Zone) Grant. It was initially due on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Minor discussion followed.

### **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 9:29 pm.*

*Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sharon Vernon*

*As revised by James Finger*