



**Economic Development Commission  
Wednesday, July 12, 2010  
Windham Town Hall Meeting Room  
Meeting Minutes**

**Members present:** Bill Hettinger, Victor Funderburk, Kay Haskell, George Buch & Bob Horrocks

**Members Absent:** Eric Crowley & Ceaser Castro

**Town Staff:** James Finger, Economic Development Staff person, Sharon Vernon, recording secretary

**Guests:** Dennis Twiss, Hank Reed & Ginnie-Rae Clay of the SBDC

**Call to order:** Bill Hettinger called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm

**Citizens & Delegations:**

None

**Minutes:**

*Kay Haskell made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of June 9, 2010. George Buch seconded the motion. All members were in favor, motion carried.*

**Presentation of SBDC:**

James Finger gave a brief introduction of the staff of the SBDC (Small Business Development Center) and explained why there were giving the presentation.

Ginne-Rae Clay thanked the EDC for having them speak at their meeting. She stated that she passed out a folder of helpful information and a brief handout of Microsoft PowerPoint slides that would assist her through her presentation. Ginnie-Rae gave a brief background history of her experience. She informed the EDC that she is the SBDC State Director and has been in economic and community development for 24 years. She added that she has a MPA from the University of Hartford, a BA in Communication from the University of Connecticut and is NDC certified (National Development

Council) She also included that she is an Economic Development Financial Professional and a Housing Development Finance Professional, and was born & raised in Connecticut and is very familiar with the Willimantic area.

Ginnie-Rae commented that the SBDC Counseling team are dedicated professionals with over 100 years of business development success. She added that they are experienced in: Business Analysis, Marketing, Small Business Fundamentals, Accounting/Financial Analysis, Manufacturing, International Trade/Export, Loan Packaging, Real Estate, Ecommerce, Knowledge of Non-Profits & Knowledge of State and Local Laws and Zoning Codes.

Ginnie-Rae stated that they have been serving CT's Small Business Community for over 25 years and provide a wide array of technical and management assistance. She also added that they foster local and regional economic development by working very closely with economic development coordinators & town officials to help them understand the business climate in their area. She added that they are able to assist clients start-up new businesses as well as expanding existing businesses. Their services include: counseling, workshops, seminars, business analysis, & loan packaging. They also provide Small Business Advocacy. Ginnie-Rae went into more detail on this subject.

Ginne-Rae stated that the SBDC has sponsored supported educational workshops and seminars. The Entrepreneur Workshop Series provides a sound foundation of education, information and resources for potential business owners and established business owners seeking to re-tool and re-educate themselves.

Business Growth- these are programs to address very specific business issues, insurance, marketing, website design, and assessment and QuickBooks etc.

Executive Education Series – is designed to assist the business owner in sustaining the business- workshops in the areas of HR Management, Strategic Planning, Inventory Control & Quality Assurance.

Ginnie-Rae explained the measurable results during Program Year 2009. She stated that they have counseled over 470 clients, 145 of those clients received more than 5 hours of one-to-one counseling. They have assisted 193 entrepreneurs in their efforts to start a business. The annual sales of client companies was over \$130 million, an estimated contribution of \$7.8 million to Connecticut's economy in a single year. They helped their clients secure more than \$4.4 million in capital, and sponsored 66 educational workshops and seminars throughout the state for more than 1,380 entrepreneurs and business owners.

Ginnie-Rae requested that Dennis Twiss and Hank Reed share some of their SBDC success stories.

Hank Reed spoke of a \$50,000 loan that he helped a client acquire for his business through the North East Alliance Program.

Dennis Twiss stated that his most memorable story was assisting a disabled female marine receive a \$45,000 grant through the V.A. (Veterans Administration.) Dennis also added that he was very pleased to work with his associates at the SBDC.

Bill Hettinger opened up the meeting for any questions or comments on the SBDC presentation:

Bob Horrocks asked the SBDC what criteria makes the business a "small business" The SBDC answered that they do not turn away any businesses.

It was also brought up that there is no charge for any of their services, although some of the workshops or seminars may have a small charge.

Bill Hettinger inquired if there was a waiting list. Dennis answered by saying that at this time with the way the economy is, there is no waiting list. He added that it is best to call ahead of time to the main number to the office instead of just dropping in. Ginnie-Rae added that when they get a request for counseling the client will get some sort of reply within 48 hours, and she added that they will continue to work with James Finger.

### **Commission member comments & economic development initiatives:**

Kay Haskell passed out notes from the seminar that they attended. Kay also mentioned that there are two economic development mission statements which should be combined into one. Kay suggested that the EDC should have a session to pull out all of the good ideas that are in the Plan of Conservation & Development and that we should start focusing on the 10-year plan. James Finger passed out a copy of the plan of development to all of the EDC members.

George Buch passed out a copy of the marketing targets:

**Targets:** New and current businesses, Site Selection Consultants, Tourists, Visitors, and the Internet.

**Methods:** Town Website, Social Media, Videos, Information packets for new & current businesses, Key information available on website in downloadable format ( e.g. Excel spreadsheet format)  
Informational packets for tourists & visitors, Use of mass media for spreading positive news (e.g. National Chrysalis award given by a North American

Trade Magazine to Dean Roy) . George added that it is imperative to spread the good news, since the newspaper seems to focus on the negative news.

George also stated that the town did not receive the "Social Media Grant", but the consultant Debra Gould stated that she would still work with the Town.

**Goals & Timelines:** Simplify Town website Home Page and enhance the Economic Development page-complete by quarter of 2011.

Establish social media accounts (e.g. Facebook, Twitter...) complete by 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2011.

Create or utilize existing video clips of area highlights for businesses (buildings, ECSU, quality of life...) and tourists/visitors (festivals, museums, public gardens, Victorians...) to be used on Town website & social media accounts.

Create brochures for business related information packets.

Create media contact list (e.g. Chronicle, Courant, Norwich Bulletin, London Day, The Neighbor, Reminder...) for spreading good news – complete by 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2010.

Bob Horrocks asked if anyone knew if PSA's are free, Kay stated that Charter Communications can put up announcements on their board, but as far as Public Service Announcements in general, someone will have to look into that.

George also spoke about the town having the capabilities to use webinar informational sessions and video conferencing such as SKYPE or Microsoft Live Meeting so that we would be able to sit down with town officials and possible clients that may live a distance away to speak about what the town may have available etc. Some discussion followed on tele-conferencing etc.

Bill Hettinger stated that a group of people met with Keeper Corporation and toured the property, this property (business moved to China) has been presented to the planning & zoning commission because someone is interested in locating a retail establishment there. Some discussion followed on the amount of industrial space that may be available there 30-40,000 s.f. and the EDC assisting them to re-develop the site. James Finger is trying to put together a list of realtors for the EDC. James also mentioned that Janiak Manufacturing has invited them to tour their site. James will email everyone to get some possible dates.

James Finger also stated that he is compiling an updated list of downtown properties, Kay Haskell is assisting him with this task.

Bill Hettinger stated that he would like to see the letter to Windham businesses that was written awhile back revised and sent out asap to the updated list of businesses. The Town will assist with the mailing and Bob

Horrocks will sign the letter, also the letter will now say to contact James Finger for information.

Bill commented that he spoke to Paula Stahl regarding the revision of zoning and feels that the EDC needs to be educated some more on zoning issues. Some discussion followed with James Finger. Bill added that he would like the EDC to have some input in the zoning revision.

Bill stated that we need to focus on tax abatement and incentives in the near future.

Bill also commented that we need to continue with business visitations and be able to document them at the end of year.

Victor Funderburke brought up the "business with pleasures" events and how it is so successful, some discussion followed on this and the Chamber in general and how we should partner with them. It was also brought up to possibly change the EDC meeting date since the Chamber events are at the same date. Some discussion followed and it was suggested that we discuss it further at our next meeting.

Bill stated that we tried to schedule the CERC meeting with Beth Wallace and it turned out to be a double booking for them so we had to cancel it. Bill suggested that we hold off on meeting with them for the time being.

### **Request to place a Commission member on a leave of absence:**

Bill Hettinger commented that the EDC has been requested to place a commission member on a leave of absence under Roberts Rules of Order, the vote at that meeting was that we table it until tonight's meeting. Bill handed out his notes on "member leave of absence" to the commission. Bill stated that he purchased a new edition of "Roberts Rules of Order" so he could familiarize himself more with the rules & procedures specifically with disciplinary actions. Bill added that it appears to be a complex process and in his opinion not too clear. Bill added that he isn't even aware if the EDC ever officially agreed to use Roberts Rules of order. Bill also stated that the Town charter states that the town council may remove any member of the commission in accordance with the town charter section 7-14, any appointed official or member of a board or commission may be removed during a term of office on the recommendation of the town manager, by the town council but for only good cause related to performance of official duty. Bill added that he sent an email to the Mayor and Town Manager requesting written clarification from the Town Attorney indicating that the EDC has authority to place a commission member on a leave of absence. Victor read the email from Neal Beets to the EDC in response to Victor's previous email. Victor added that he thought that Neal's point was that they were not asking the EDC to take any disciplinary action. Bill opened the floor for discussion: Bob Horrocks asked why the EDC was requested to make this decision since it

was the Town Council that appointed him. Bill stated that he asked the same question at the last meeting, he added that the town council has the authority and it is not clear that the EDC does. Victor suggested that the EDC make a recommendation (not an action).

*Victor Funderburke made a motion that the EDC recommend to the Town Council that Caesar Castro be placed on a leave of absence until all of his legal issues have been resolved. George Buch seconded it, all members approved, motion carried.*

### **New Business:**

Victor Funderburke commented that in July the Burton Leavitt Theatre will be performing the show "All Shook Up", Victor also added that Jorgenson Auditorium is undergoing a large renovation and have purchased new theater seats and they have graciously donated many of the seats to the Windham Theater Guild. Victor added that the dinner theater has declined because of the many restaurants now surrounding the theater, so now they have more room for extra seating and hope that this will be a big asset to the theater.

### **Citizens & Delegations:**

John Monahan commented on re-doing the Town of Windham website. He gave the Town of Hebron as an example because they have such a great economic development website page.

***Kay Haskell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. George Buch seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.***

*Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sharon Vernon*