



Economic Development Commission
Wednesday, May 12, 2010
Windham Town Hall Auditorium
Meeting Minutes

Members present: Bob Horrocks, Victor Funderburk, Bill Hettinger, Kay Haskell, Cesar Castro

Members Absent: Eric Crowley, George Buch

Town Staff: Sharon Vernon, recording secretary

Guests: Mark Paquette, Crystal Xavior

Call to order: Bob Horrocks called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm

Citizens & Delegations:

None

Minutes: *Kay Haskell made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of April 14, 2010. Cesar Castro seconded the motion. All members were in favor, motion carried.*

Regional Economic Development Partnership – Mark Paquette:

Mark Paquette gave a brief background history of when Dave Prendergast & Ted Montgomery (past E.D. Directors) served on the original economic development partnership in 1999. Mark stated that this has been collaboration amongst 22 towns in North East Connecticut since late 1998. Dave Prendergast was the first member as our first Economic Development Director in our Town. Mark gave a brief summary of the Economic Development District Designation (EDD) and an update to the 2007 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDDS). Mark commented that the partnership which mission continues today, is to foster a vibrant and sustainable economy that provides a skilled workforce through outstanding educational and training opportunities, preserves a healthy natural environment and the rural character of our communities, expands economic opportunity, and improves the quality of life for all residents. Mark's other points were: Currently there are no Economic Development District

Designations in CT. CT is one of only 2 states in the U.S. that do not have recognized ED Districts. All 22 towns will become eligible for EDA funds. Planning funds will also be available to the region. CT Legislature passed HB 5383 which encourages the creation of EDD's. DECD can make priority regional grants to regional economic development districts for municipal development projects and for economic development & manufacturing assistance. Update of CEDS includes: Evaluation of 2007 Plan Projects, Requests to town for new projects and Update of relevant demographic data, maps and text. Mark concluded the summary with the EDD process: Completion of 2007 CEDS update, Approval of each COG, Approval by DECD Commissioner, Approval by Governor and application submittal to EDA (projected to be on July 1, 2010). Mark also passed out a map of the 22 towns involved in the partnership. Bill Hettinger asked where the funding would go, directly to the Town or to WINCOG. Mark answered that the funding would go directly to the town and that is why he strongly recommends the Town to update their priority projects. Some discussion followed on the Town's past priority projects, what types of projects would be eligible and partnering with other towns on projects.

Bill Hettinger made a motion that the EDC is in favor of the Town joining the Northeastern Connecticut Economic Partnership. Kay Haskell seconded the motion, all approved, motion carried.

Other announcements & reports:

Bob stated that this Friday night Kerrie's Studio/Gallery will be open and they will be having a reception between 4-6 pm. Bob commented that Kerrie is an accomplished artist that is autistic and deaf and is a client of Camp Horizons. Some discussion followed on the activities that will be happening. Bob also stated that this is a good example of how disabled people can make their way through society and be active participating members of our community. The re-locating of Swift Waters & the new business of "Doggie Styles" have also agreed to join in the reception & festivities.

Bob announced that there is a Business Capital Expo on May 13th, and NCDC is hosting a workshop on "Communities Connecting to Compete" on Monday June 14th @ 7:30 am and to let him know if anyone is interested in attending any of these.

There was some discussion on the new appliance store that opened in town. Ceaser stated that he made a visit to the store and that these were refurbished appliances that are still in good condition, some are "like new".

Ceaser discussed the business packets that he and Kay Haskell put together to help continue with the "Jump Start" Business Assistance Program that Ted Montgomery & Sharon Vernon managed while they were in the economic development office.

Bob Horrocks & Bill Hettinger mentioned their concern as to where the phone calls and emails are going that used to be directed to the economic development office and that we should look into this so we don't lose any clients in the cracks, and that we should ask the Town Manager's Office exactly what they expect from the EDC. Bob stated that we should ask them how many inquiries are coming in regarding economic development and business assistance issues and who is handling them and what we can do to help. Some discussion followed on this.

It was also mentioned that we should have a list of all the vacant buildings in town.

Bill Hettinger inquired about CERC and what they might be able to do to assist us with economic development issues. Sharon commented that she would email Bill with the contact information.

Victor Funderburk commented on having available vacant property fliers with photos of the property and it's info etc. that would interest possible new clients, some discussion followed on this and the Town's assessor's property website.

Bob asked Sharon if she would explain more about the economic development office's Business Assistance program. Sharon gave a brief summary of the program, and also spoke about the wealth of knowledge for potential business owners available at CERC's "Smart Start" Program and the CT-CLIC website. www.ct-clic.com (Connecticut Licensing Info Center) Some discussion followed on Google's web page (talking heads) regarding questions on starting a new business and wether or not we should provide a link to our Town's webpage.

Ceaser reported on an event that will be a fundraiser for several non-profit agencies such as the "Little Angels" program, he stated as soon as he receives more information he will get it to us.

Guests:

Crystal Xavior asked the EDC what they could do for the high unemployment rates specifically for disabled people. Victor commented that businesses need to come from within, research shows that new businesses are generated locally. Victor's suggestion was to get a group of people together find an empty building, find a leading entrepreneur, and hire locally from your group. Discussion followed on generating new businesses in town.

Some discussion followed on the possibilities of what may go into the buildings that the DeVivos purchased. Bob commented that the idea of a Hotel/Apartment building is appealing. Incubator office space was also discussed.

Citizens & Delegations:

None

Kay Haskell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bill Hettinger seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:53 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sharon Vernon