

Economic Development Commission

October 7, 2013

Windham Town Hall

Meeting Room

979 Main St., Willimantic, CT

Call to Order: the Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM. Those present were Bill Hettinger, Bob Horrocks, Victor Funderburk, and John McCommas. Also in attendance, Louisa, from the Chronicle, Behroz Baraghoshi, PhD, from UConn; and James Finger as staff.

Citizens& delegations comments/questions - None

Review/approval of Minute – September 9, 2013. Moved by Commissioner McCommas, Seconded by Commissioner Horrocks to table the minutes of the September 9, 2013 meeting, with the requested amendment. Motion Carried with Chairman Hettinger abstaining.

Old Business

- **Community Vision Topic** – Board members discussed Commissioner Funderburk’s motion to form a subcommittee whose purpose would be to brainstorm and put into writing, what Main Street should look like. Commissioners Funderburk and Horrocks will be that subcommittee and will attend the Downtown Revitalization Institute workshop, Great Place Making, to be held in Hartford on October 25.
- **Business Signage** – follow up on design. Commissioner has contacted June Bisantz and she has agreed to design a sign for the commission’s approval. Once a design is settled on, local businesses will be contacted to determine their interest in purchasing the sign. The topic will be discussed again when a sign has been designed.
- **Business Calling Program** –Commissioners discussed activities in town.
 - The school project at the old YMCA building is ready to get started and they expect to be done in 9 months.
 - Chairman Hettinger asked about properties on Commerce Drive that are currently vacant or unoccupied. Mr. Finger replied that a dog training company is hoping to open soon in the unoccupied location, and Chairman Hettinger reported that he knows of a trucking company that may be interested in locating at the vacant property.
 - Commissioner Horrocks reported on interest in the Quilter’s Dream building on Main St., a business owner seeking funding to renovate the building and open an insurance office and yogurt shop. The only funding available is the C-Pace program.
 - CL&P is closing its operations in Willimantic. Chairman Hettinger asked Mr. Finger to contact Northeast Utilities and request they donate the Yankee Gas property along the river to the town. He also asked if CL&P will be leaving substation equipment on the property. Stay on top of this issue.
 - Commissioner Horrocks reported that the sidewalk sale in Willimantic was quite successful and Thread City Development is considering having another. And, Thread City Development is also continuing to work on the downtown Willimantic website.
 - Commissioner Funderburk reported that Storrs Center businesses did much better over the summer than was anticipated. Students continue to patronize the businesses and businesses are open late. Chairman Hettinger reported that a group of Willimantic merchants is planning to survey ECSU students to determine what businesses they would like to see downtown.

- Commissioner Funderburk reported that the Burton Leavitt Theater is doing well. A special discount is being offered to students that has created an increase of students attending. There
- Commissioner McCommas reported on Lots and More. The company is looking for a larger space for its outdoor garden center. Watch for future activity from that company. Commissioner also told the board about the new consignment shop in North Windham, where Western Auto used to be. Chairman Hettinger reported that there are three units in that location, the consignment shop, an insurance office and an auto repair business, whose owner is
- Chairman Hettinger asked about the trailer business in North Windham and Mr. Finger reported that the business has moved out. Also, Chairman Hettinger reported on the dairy store opening next to Tractor Supply in North Windham.
- Commissioner Funderburk reported he attended a meeting put on by the Windham Federation of Teachers. The recent student scores were not as good as expected. Commissioner Funderburk believes that community schools are the answer to the problems in our schools. Community schools are very successful in other areas of the country.

Chairman's report – Chairman Hettinger reported he met briefly with QVCC officials to discuss Entrepreneurial Training. QVCC has operated a very successful program which teaches high school student college classes. Dialog has been started to continue and expand this program.

Other reports/correspondence/announcements –

C-Pace - Mr. Finger reported on the C-Pace marketing meeting he attended. Commissioners discussed the difficulties with the program, it requires a large investment which make it difficult for small businesses. Mr. Finger also reported on the Small Business Energy Advantage Program through CL&P. Chairman Hettinger suggested reaching out to Wal-Mart, Home Depot and Sears.

Enterprise Zone –Possible benefits and expansion of the enterprise zone were discussed. DECD requires

Other –

- Mr. Finger reported on a meeting he attended today at ECSU. Programs discussed at the meeting were many of the programs we have heard about before. Funding for the STEP-UP program for employers has been exhausted, except for veterans.
- Commissioner Funderburk asked for discussion of the federal government shut-down. Is there something we can do to prepare for the possible default of the federal government? Commissioners turned to Behroz Baraghoshi for insight on the subject.

Citizens & delegations comments/questions –Behroz Baraghoshi, PhD said the he and many other economists believe default of the federal government would cause another recession.

It was moved by Commissioner McCommas and Seconded by Commissioner Horrocks to adjourn the meeting at 8:42.

Respectfully submitted by Janet Laukaitis for James Finger, Planner/Business Liaison