

# Economic Development Commission

November 4, 2013

Windham Town Hall

Meeting Room

979 Main St., Willimantic, CT

**Call to Order:** Chairman Hettinger called the meeting to order at 7:36 PM. Those present were Bill Hettinger, Bob Horrocks, and John McCommas. Also in attendance, Louisa, from the Chronicle, Behroz Baraghoshi, PhD, from ECSU; and James Finger as staff.

**Citizens & delegations comments/questions** - None

**Review/approval of Minute – October 7, 2013.** Moved by Commissioner McCommas, Seconded by Commissioner Horrocks to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2013 meeting, with correction of Behroz Baraghoshi's affiliation to ECSU instead of UConn; and clarification that it was Commissioner Funderburk who contacted June Bisantz regarding business signage. With suggested corrections, motion carried.

**Community Vision Topic** – Chairman Hettinger reported on the “Our Town” grant available through the National Endowment for the Arts, as a possible funding source for community vision topics. Possible uses of the Our Town grant were discussed and Mr. Finger will research the requirements of the grant.

**Place making workshop** - Commissioner Horrocks reported on the place making workshop. It was suggested that public input is necessary and so Commissioner Horrocks suggested that this commission partner with Thread City Development to hold a charrette to get public input.

**Our Town Grant Application** – Commissioners discussed the funding and match requirements for the Our Town Grant.

There was more discussion of the Our Town Grant and the Place Making Workshop; the need to involve the community and local non-profit agencies in the discussion of these ideas. Commissioner McCommas introduced the subject of Jillson Square and possible changes and improvements there, and possible improvements were discussed by the commission. Commissioner Horrocks suggests partnering with local non-profit organizations to hear their ideas for community vision.

As community outreach, Chairman Hettinger will send an email to the Arts Collaborative, Willimantic Renaissance, Thread City Development and the Access Agency to get more ideas and their help to get the community involved.

**Request for Tax Deferment for improvements to 790 - 798 Main Street** - The property owner of 790-798 Main Street has withdrawn his application for Tax Deferment.

**UConn Economic Development Center News** – Mr. Finger discussed the traffic study proposed for Route 195. In an effort to direct traffic to the Frog Bridge and historic downtown, new signage was suggested, to designate Jackson St. as an alternate to Ash Street, for traffic southbound on Route 195. Perhaps a designation as 195A is possible.

Chairman Hettinger discussed UConn's Economic Development Center. A letter of support of the new Storrs Center was sent and, it was suggested that perhaps some UConn offices would be located in Willimantic. Perhaps it's time to reconnect with UConn and discuss the possibility of establishing an entrepreneurial group to help new businesses in Willimantic. Commissioners discussed the composition and function of an entrepreneurial group.

Commissioner Horrocks returned to the place making topic and drew the commissioner's attention to his hand-out of notes from the Place Making Workshop. He highlighted topics of particular significance; the need to repeat projects on a regular basis, be persistent; build on current resources (artists-musicians-dance-theater-history, etc.); increase the number of interesting places; and Commissioner Horrocks also discussed

his list of suggestions, perhaps hire a Main Street Coordinator. Chairman Hettinger suggested getting an intern from one of the local universities to fill the role of Main Street Coordinator. There was more discussion of place making and the need for a downtown coordinator.

**Business Signage** – We're still waiting for a proposed design from June Bisantz.

**Business Calling Program** – Commissioners discussed activities in town.

- Commissioner Horrocks reported he had dinner at “Jamaica Me Crazy” and it was a cute restaurant. There was some discussion of the menu and location.
- Mr. Finger reported that he is still working with CT Casket, a company trying to relocate to a different location in town. The trouble is, because they need financing, their bank must approve the new location. Possible new locations were discussed.
- Commissioner McCommas asked for an update of CL&P's move out of town. Mr. Finger confirmed that CL&P is closing its operations in Willimantic. The Yankee Gas facility will remain. The CL&P building is nice but, it is not handicapped equipped.
- Commissioner Horrocks reported on a workshop he attended on how companies could make use of interns. Chairman Hettinger agreed that this committee could use interns.
- Chairman Hettinger reported that the Keeper property won't be sold to the motorcycle company. The owner of the motorcycle is refocusing his efforts on property in another town.

**Other** –

- Mr. Finger distributed a flyer about Windham's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness' website *Blueprint for Housing*. Launch will be held on November 15, 2013, 8:30-10:00. Possible causes or solutions to Homelessness were discussed.
- Mr. Finger distributed maps of the Enterprise Zone, the Entertainment Zone, and the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. There was general discussion of the zones and expansion of the boundaries of these zones. Chairman Hettinger suggested this topic be added to the agenda for next month's meeting.

**Citizens & delegations comments/questions** – none

It was Moved by Commissioner McCommas and Seconded by Commissioner Horrocks to adjourn the meeting at 9:32.

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