

Economic Development Commission

December 1, 2014 - Regular Meeting

Windham Town Hall

979 Main St., Willimantic, CT

Call to Order: the Acting Chairman, Bob Horrocks, called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. Those present were Pam DeVivo, John McCommas, and Victor Funderburk arrived at 7:38. Also in attendance; Tom DeVivo, Town Council member; Andy Gutt, Cafémantic, and James Finger, as staff.

Citizens& delegations comments/questions –Tom DeVivo came before the board with questions about the proposed parking garage. What would be the charge for parking? Who would collect the charge? Commissioners discussed particulars. Mr. DeVivo stressed the need for a business plan.

In response to Commissioner Horrocks invitation, Andrew Gutt, owner of Cafémantic, came before the commission to discuss his business. Commissioners asked how his business is going and how can this commission help. Issues Mr. Gutt said were important to his business: financing, parking, and advertising. He does his advertising on social media. He is glad the town is now enforcing parking regulations because his business needs a frequent turnover of customers. And, SBDC did an expense survey and looked over his books for him, to give him advice on financing. SAMA helped through their Small Business Express program, and gave him connections with Hartford businesses. Mr. Gutt said more money should be invested in downtown. He is pleased that the PZC is working hard to align their regulations with the Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD). While he is pleased with the repaving of the parking lot next to Willard's, more landscaping is needed. The same is true of downtown sidewalks. We need to raise the bar, we are worth it.

Review/approval of Minute – November 3, 2014. Minutes of the November 3, 2014 were reviewed by commissioners. Correction of minutes is required in the Chairman's Report; motion was made by Commissioner DeVivo and seconded by Commissioner McCommas. MOVED by Commissioner McCommas and SECONDED by Commissioner Funderburk to approve the minutes of the November 3, 2014 meeting, with the required change. Motion carried.

New Business

National Endowment for the Arts Grant – for Willimantic Whitewater Park – Town Manager's participation & support letter. A copy of the Town Manager's letter was distributed to the commissioner.

Old Business

Council Directive on Town owned property at 804 Main Street. The Commission was briefed on the Town Council's Directive to the Town Manager regarding the Town owned property at 804 Main St. The Council passed a motion directing the Town Manager to make "small improvements" to the property (formerly Tin Tsin lot) - such as bringing in some material to fill the worst potholes on this lot.

The Council also directed the Town Manager to report back by the second regular Council meeting in January as to how much it would cost to grade and construct a parking lot on the site that would comply with all code requirements.

Business Calling Program—None

Downtown Arts & Eats District—Commissioner Horrocks reported there were 4 or 5 artists involved and more are needed. Commissioner Funderburk is currently working on a logo for the Arts & Eats program, and “My Windham” is working with the group. A directory map, detailing the location of the businesses displaying artworks, is the next project.

Windham Airport - Mr. Finger attended an informational meeting and another meeting is scheduled for 12/9/14, at 5:00 p.m., at the Town Hall.

Business Signage Program underway –Mr. Finger reported that the Business Signs are being made and money has been collected from 6 businesses, in 9 different locations. Winter weather may put this project on hold.

Chairman’s Report—None

Other reports/correspondence/announcements –

2015 annual meeting schedule - The 2015 annual meeting schedule was discussed. It was Moved by Commissioner Horrocks and Seconded by Commissioner DeVivo, that the scheduled meeting time be changed to 7:00 p.m., and meeting dates should remain on the first Monday of the month. Motion Carried.

Budgeting for FY 15/16 Grant Appropriation Funds – After discussion of the budget for Grant Appropriation Funds, it was Moved by Commissioner McCommas and Seconded by Commissioner Funderburk to have a \$500,000 line item, to seek grants for economic development. Motion Carried.

Citizens & delegations comments/questions –

Commissioner Horrocks suggested a Business Plan for the Parking Garage is needed.

Commissioner Funderburk mentioned the Industrial Park on Route 32 in South Windham. With the economy improving, it time to get the word out, and contact the state to ask for support.

Commissioner DeVivo will contact Cynthia VanZelm to ask her to present to this commission.

MOVED by Commissioner McCommas and SECONDED by Commissioner DeVivo to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m. Motion Carried.

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