

Economic Development Commission

Special Meeting

December 3, 2012

Windham Town Hall

Meeting Room

979 Main St., Willimantic, CT

Call to Order: the Chairman called the meeting to order at approximately 7:37 PM. Those present were Bill Hettinger-Chairman, Bob Horrocks, John McCommas, and Victor Funderburk. James Finger was present as staff.

Citizens & Delegation: No one was present in the audience to speak.

Minutes: The Chairman referred to meeting minutes of November 5, 2012, John McCommas moved to approve – Bob Horrocks seconded – all approved.

Approve annual meeting schedule for 2013: The Chairman suggested that the Commission continue meeting on the first Monday of each month except when a holiday occurred, unless there was an objection. In discussing the matter, it appeared that there may be a holiday in September. Victor Funderburk made the motion that the Commission would meet on the first Monday of each month except in September when it would meet on the second Monday - which is September 9, 2013. John McCommas seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

New Business: Chamber promotional material on Tourism – postponed until next month

Chairman's Report – The Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting of the Thread City Development where they had unveiled a new web site for Willimantic Downtown: <http://www.willimanticdowntown.org>. He added that someone at the Capital Theater Arts Magnet School put together an excellent video clip that shows customers shopping for records, or coffee, and he recommended that we get on the Commission's web page. This is the direct link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OUt0LLi9t8&feature=youtu.be>

He then mentioned the Chronicle article discussing the forum held at Eastern CT State University on "Mill Town Rebirth" – several people were listed, and he said he would like to get in touch with some of them to see if we could get them to talk with us.

Next he mention a flyer from the University of Connecticut entitled: 'U-CONN – Tech Park - Informational meeting for municipal employees and Economic Development Officials and organizations'. This is for local Economic Development people and would be held at the Gamble Pavilion on December 4th. Mary Holz-Clause and some other people will give an update on the U-CONN Technology Park, and he said he planned to attend.

Next, he mentioned information from the Main Street Center relating to a New York City report on 'Well Designed Streets' and you can find more information at their web site: <http://ctmainstreet.org>

Recommendations for Legislative Agenda

The Chairman asked the Business Liaison what the EDC should be doing with this item. Mr. Finger explained that a few that he thought we should look at were on the STEAP grants (Small Town Economic Assistance Program), and maybe the business signage on State highways. He gave a brief overview of concerns, and suggested that we contact our legislative delegation about the restrictions that prevent the Town from participating in the STEAP. On the other item for business signage, he explained that he met with the Town Manager and Town Engineer, and they determined that we could put up Business directional signs on Town Streets, but we'll need to get some details on how and where they could go before we market this to our Downtown Business community. However, the Town Engineer said the State would have to be involved in signs along the State highway, so we may need to discuss the DOT's restrictions on directional signs along State Highways with our legislative delegation. The Chairman mentioned one that he has seen that is quite on Route 6 in North Windham that directs people to a Farm/business on Bassett's Bridge Road.

Marketing / data efforts

The Chairman mentioned a program on 'Start-up Communities' – relating to removing impediments to entrepreneurs and non-compete clauses from larger corporations that prevent them from offering services to others. So this talk about the need for new legislation that prevents companies from making their employees sign away their rights to working on their own if they leave or get laid off from their company. Mr. Finger mentioned that there are similar problems for local businesses with marketing with national chains that prevents a local business like - like Hosmer Mountain from putting their machines in the buildings. Some discussion ensued.

Next the Chairman asked Mr. Finger to give a briefing on a notice to the Town received on an opportunity to participate in creating a local Airport Development Zone for the Windham Airport. Mr. Finger explained that the State Legislators passed new legislation that set up a separate State authority for public airports – including Windham, and that they are trying to define an 'Airport development Zone'. He said he had been in contact with officials at this new authority, as well as several property owners abutting the airport to advise them of this opportunity to see how we could take advantage of this new legislation. He said he would be working on fine tuning the details. The Chairman said he we should explore this opportunity and support it if it will enhance our ability to draw businesses, but not if it's for the exclusive use of the Airport. He then asked the Business Liaison to check on any free advertising or marketing that we could get through CERC - the CT Economic Resources Center

Other reports/correspondence/announcements/activities

Marketing/data efforts: Mr. Finger explained that he has been working with the Windham Mills on paperwork relating to their zoning amendment and they are now trying to do their marketing reports on the need and demand for apartments. In other news, he reported that he has been working with CERC to update them on the Town's top employers and tax payers, as well as infrastructural improvements relating to water and sewer capacity. In addition, they had offered a low subscription price to list up to five municipal

properties for \$100. The Town Manager wondered if we could include private properties, but Mr. Finger said that he had discussed this with CERC, and they have a separate price for private properties. The Chairman said we know that several Real Estate firms do advertise with CERC because it's cheap advertisement for them; we don't have a lot of industrial property – except for the potential industrial site in South Windham – but it will need some work. We also have the potential Public Works site and adjoining transfer station site – and at some point, those may become available for development.

Business calling program: the Chairman asked if any of the Commission members had been out to visit. Commissioner Horrocks said he stopped by a few businesses downtown to see how things were going; among these were the 'City Deli', and the proposed 'Jamaican Me Crazy' restaurant (not opened yet) – the owner is very enthusiastic.

Citizens & Delegation: No one was present in the audience to speak.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 PM

Respectfully submitted

James Finger

Planner/Business Liaison