

Economic Development Commission

August 4, 2014

Windham Town Hall

979 Main St., Willimantic, CT

Call to Order: the Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:50 PM. Those present were Bill Hettinger, Bob Horrocks, and Victor Funderburk. Also in attendance: James Finger as staff.

Citizens& delegations comments/questions –None

Review/approval of Minute – July 7 2, 2014. Minutes of the July 7, 2014 were reviewed by commissioners. MOVED by Commissioner Horrocks and SECONDED by Commissioner Funderburk to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2014 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

New Business

Airport Development Zone – Commissioners discussed the Airport Development Zone and Mr. Finger reported that he notified DECD that the town is ready to proceed but was informed that DECD is not ready yet.

Old Business

Business Signage Program underway – Commissioner’s discussed the Business Signage Program and Mr. Finger reported that the Town Engineer would like to see more businesses interested in the program. To date, Edible Arrangements, Harp on Church, and Design Center East have expressed interest.

Progress report on blighted Buildings Downtown - Commissioners discussed the following properties:

- **699 Main St. (aka Hurley Building):** Northeast Development wants to do supportive housing and a new roof would be installed by the end of the year. The possibility of Veteran’s Housing was discussed. It was reported that since affordable housing money is available, affordable housing would likely be done.
- **760 Main St. (aka Pouya Building):**This building has been condemned and Code Enforcement said the owner is uncooperative. Notice of blight is being sent and fines will be charges. Commissioner Horrocks suggested that this matter be left on the agenda, and Chairman Hettinger suggested that the matter should be “kicked-up” now. Commissioner Horrocks suggested a dialogue with the owners as this is a valuable building. Mr. Finger said parking is the biggest hurdle for this property and parking issues were discussed. Commissioner Horrocks will get contact information for the owners and contact them.
- **(Town Owned) Chapman Block:** Commissioners discussed this location, former site of Tsin Sin Restaurant, which is currently being used as a parking lot. The possibility of making it a part of a walking path was also discussed.

- **1 Jillson Sq. (former Cinema building):** A couple different parties who were interested in this property have backed off, and new people are working on possible purchase. They have worked with Matt Vertefeuille, Code Enforcement Officer and the Town is happy to work with any buyer. The building is not technically blighted, because it's boarded-up.
- **87 Church St. (aka former Willimantic Lumber & Coal):** A local baker was interested in this property but, the current owner wanted to charge them for repairs to the building; so the project fell apart.

Commissioners discussed the benefits of having an Economic Development Director; the Community Block Grant; and the Thread Mill buildings.

There was further discussion of development issues in town. Commissioner Funderburk said it is necessary to have discussion with the community because developers would not be interested if the community is not talking about development. Commissioners also discussed the possibility of putting a band shell in Jillson Square; and the Farmer's Market was discussed.

Community Vision Topics: Commissioner Funderburk reported on the Arts & Eats project. Six businesses and a dozen artists are working together and moving forward. The Arts Committee received a leadership grant and plans to meet on August 18th to discuss how to proceed. Commissioner Funderburk is unable to attend the meeting and suggested that someone from this commission should attend.

Chairman's Report: Chairman Hettinger asked Mr. Finger about what is happening with the CL&P building and asked about access to the Mill #4 site. Mr. Finger will check on these properties.

Commissioners discussed the closing of Fusion Paperboard in the Town of Sprague.

Chairman Hettinger reported First Alliance Funding is looking to move into Town.

Commissioner Horrocks asked what is happening with the Economic Development position. Chairman Hettinger reported that the job description, with comments, has been forwarded to the Town Manager. No response has been received yet.

Adjournment: MOVED by Commissioner Horrocks and SECONDED by Commissioner Funderburk to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m. Motion Carried.

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