

MINUTES

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MADDEN ROOM
SOUTH WINDSOR TOWN HALL**

RECEIVED
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@ 10:05 AM
BY: Ka C. Staniel, Clerk
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, January 25, 2023
TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Vice Chairperson Paul Burnham, Linda Jeski, Joseph Kennedy, James Murray, Alternate James Mitchell (sat for Scott Kelley), Alternate Mindy Lewis (sat David Marsh), and Daniel Kane

ABSENT: Chairperson David Marsh, Susan Burnham, William Jodice, Louise Neary, Scott Kelley, Alternates Michael Buganski and Victor Dorobantu

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Liz Pendleton, Council Liaison Andrew Paterna, Asst. Town Manager Scott Roberts

1. Call Meeting to Order: Vice Chairperson Paul Burnham called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

2. Roll Call: The above-mentioned members were introduced.

3. Public Participation: None.

4. Special Presentation: Mayor Liz Pendleton shared with the commission, that included in the goals of her 2-year term, is a review of all boards and commissions and the inclusion of critical information to encourage public participation. She would like members of the public to be able to find out all information about them and in her review Mayor Pendleton came across the EDC Commission and its procedure for the appointment of members. She called the town attorney and discovered that the process for EDC is unique and also governed by State statute. A section of the town attorney's memorandum pertaining to the appointment of EDC members was read aloud. A critical piece that needs to be addressed is the ending terms of a current commissioner, which is in violation. A commissioner's term expires November 2024 and it will need to be extended so that it expires in 2025. Commissioner Jeski asked if the term extension would also apply to alternates and Mayor Pendleton suggested that Chairperson Marsh review the town attorney's memorandum and then contact her to discuss it. Mayor Pendleton asked the Commission to let her know when they are ready to move forward with the change(s). Vice Chairperson P. Burnham announced that the item can be put on next month's agenda. A copy of the memorandum will be sent to Chairperson Marsh for distribution to commission members. Mayor Pendleton invited commissioners to reach out to the Mayor or Town Manager for further discussion. She will also be speaking to both political parties about their nominations.

Mayor Pendleton announced that the next Quad Board meeting will be Thursday, April 6 at 6pm and members will get an email reminder from Amanda in the Town Manager's office.

5. Approval of Minutes:

- (a) Minutes from Regular Meeting on 11/16/22: A **motion** was made by Commissioner Jeski and **seconded** by Commissioner Murray to approve the minutes with the following corrections:
Page 3, Item 9, 2nd bullet should read: "...which is now located in..."
Page 4, Item 9, 2nd bullet should read: "...stated that P&Z meets..."

Page 4, Item 9, 4th bullet should read: "...at the next Quad Board..."

Commissioners Jeski, Murray, Kennedy voted in favor. Commissioner Kane and Alternates Mitchell and Lewis abstained. ***Motion did not pass. Item tabled until February Meeting.***

6. Old Business: None.

7. Committee Report(s)

(a) Strategic Planning Committee: Commissioner Lewis reported that they met on Tuesday, January 24 and that the survey is live and has been disseminated by different town agencies and partners. The committee needs to reach out to more community members to expand the diversity of responses. Postcards with a QR code will be mailed out to all taxpayers, both personal and business, and the town manager's office is handling the task. UCONN School of Public Policy is helping with the survey. Mr. Roberts suggested adding a tiny.url to the postcard for people unable to scan the QR code and distributing them via the post office's 'postal patron' option which delivers to all addresses in town. A bulk mailing is the most cost effective method and eliminates each one being personally addressed. Commissioner Lewis shared that the committee wants to get the postcards out as quickly as possible. They will also have focus groups for more input and they plan to discuss the survey results at their next meeting. The committee is planning to make a presentation to the Town Council in June. One survey question asks respondents what type of economic development they would like to see in town. A link to the survey will be placed on the front page of the town's website. Mr. Roberts asked for follow up so he could make sure to put the link on the website.

(b) Quad Board Sub-Committee: Commissioner Jeski didn't attend the last meeting however lots of ideas have been proposed on finding a way to keep taxes low by encouraging economic development. This requires commissions and boards to work together. Taxpayers also need a better understanding of how the mill rate is determined. Commissioner Jeski asked Mayor Pendleton if the town assessor could put the calculation on the website so it is more transparent. Residents don't understand how abatements are decided either. Mr. Roberts would love to have a few volunteers film a discussion of how abatements work and what is taxed for a 5-10 minute video that could be posted to the website and social media. Commissioner Kennedy stated that taxes will increase this year and that the video would help to explain the current situation. He would also like to see moratoriums removed. No volunteers for the video stepped forward. Commissioner Jeski shared that moratoriums were discussed at the last Quad Board meeting and that the regulations for warehouses aren't finished yet so they are thinking of extending the moratoriums. Mr. Roberts shared that Ms. Lipe shared that the residential portion of the POCD will be up for public comment in March and warehouses in April. Town Council Liaison Paterna mentioned the issue surrounding Geissler's plaza as a project that could easily increase the amount of tax revenue. Vice Chairperson P. Burnham spoke with Town Manager Maniscalco who said it is still in litigation. The judge sent it to mediation but they haven't come to a compromise. Commissioner Murray feels that investors will move on to other towns if it isn't resolved soon. Commissioner Jeski feels the issue isn't about the sidewalks and since it's a state road, it is not in the town's purview. Commissioner Kennedy feels that it is related to the apartments. Commissioner Jeski stated that the letter from the commission was given to Ms. Lipe but that she still needed to read it into the record. It is possible that P&Z is worried about Sullivan Avenue becoming lined with apartment buildings. Vice Chairperson P. Burnham suggests speaking with other party members to give your opinion and share facts about the

project to have a frank discussion to find out where each side stands to determine what can be done. Mr. Paterna stated that it is not a party issue. Mr. Roberts reminded commissioners to be careful of their discussions because the issue is in litigation and that everyone needs to trust the court process since the judge will have to make or force a ruling. Mr. Paterna believes there is a chance that the project could lose the developer, and Geissler's, in the meantime, and that time is not on the town's side. Mr. Paterna also stated that there are only a few people involved with the negotiations and that they are not sharing information with the rest of their commission.

8. New Business

- (a) Plan of Conservation and Development Questionnaire: Mr. Roberts received a copy of the questionnaire as a department head but hasn't yet seen copies for boards and commissions. Once it's ready it can be brought to the commission to be completed as a unit. The department head questionnaire was due by February 1. Vice Chairperson P. Burnham stated that Chairperson Marsh sent him a document but he was unable to open it. He will make sure that the questionnaire is shared with commission members and asked everyone to be ready to review and discuss it at the February meeting.
- (b) Quad Board Sub-committee Mission and Objectives: Commissioner Jeski stated that the sub-committee was supposed to work on it during their last meeting and that she hasn't seen the meeting minutes. Mr. Roberts heard there wasn't a quorum.
- (c) EDC Charter Review: Commissioner Jeski shared that in Mayor Pendleton's assessment of the boards and commissions and efforts to update information discovered that there are some changes and additions that need to be made to the bylaws. Commissioner Jeski shared copies of the town attorney's proposed changes with commissioners. The bylaws can be updated and approved within the EDC as long as they follow the State Statutes and the town charter. Commissioners discussed the proposed change to item 3 pertaining to the need to add a plan for election of chairperson. Vice Chairperson P. Burnham believes the change puts pressure on the opposing party to find someone to fill the role and that this bullet should remain the same. Commissioner Jeski will discuss options with Mayor Pendleton.
A **motion** to table a vote on proposed changes to the EDC By-Laws was made by Commissioner Murray and **seconded** by Commissioner Kennedy and was **unanimously approved. Motion passed.**
- (d) Home and Product show for South Windsor businesses: Vice Chairperson P. Burnham has been approached by businesses in town to host a home and product show. The Chamber used to do an expo for their members. Mr. Maniscalco likes the idea but logistics would need to be discussed-such as how much to charge and if sponsorships could be accepted. Is the commission in favor of creating this type of event? The Chamber could have a table or be a co-sponsor. Businesses looking for more exposure and this would be a business to consumer event, offered to all businesses in town. It could showcase home products and be a job fair-held at the high school or wherever there is ample parking. The event would need to be promoted inside and outside of South Windsor to promote in town businesses. It could be done in the fall and a committee of business members and town members could be formed. Mr. Roberts suggested reaching out to someone with experience to help coordinate it and the event could include restaurants and more to encompass a wider variety of businesses. Commissioner Kennedy helped coordinate a fishing expo and the most expensive aspect was insurance. Mr. Roberts suggested that the EDC could offer several smaller themed expos. Commissioner Mitchell asked if there is any anticipated pushback from the Chamber. Vice Chairperson P. Burnham is not sure about pushback since this is the first time the commission is considering something like this together but that they could be a part of it. Mr. Paterna agrees that it could be viewed as competition to the Chamber's activity and that it takes a longer timeline to put

something like this together so a partnership with the Chamber makes more sense. Vice Chairperson P. Burnham will reach out to the Chamber for their input. Mr. Paterna suggested that non-Chamber member businesses could be offered the opportunity to participate at a higher vendor fee as a way to be more inclusive.

9. Economic Development Opportunities/Updates: Vice Chairperson P. Burnham reported that the project at the intersection of Rye Street and Sullivan Avenue has just broken ground and will be done in 3 phases. They are having difficulties finding tenants. One of the phases has approval for a drive-thru. He is not sure if the developer will apply for abatement.

Mr. Roberts shared the following updates:

- Shake Shack is opening soon but the town hasn't received an invite to the grand opening yet.
- Whole Foods is on track and doing well. A transition will be coming soon since one company constructs the shell and another does the interior and fits it out.
- Charter Realty has more tenants coming and will hopefully share their news by summer.
- 2 abatements in process-Hartford Truck on rte 5 and a self-storage facility. Both applicants will be coming before EDC.
- Amazon is still coming. They were focused on getting their Windsor facility up and operational. South Windsor will be a 'last mile' site with vans and 'Uber' type pick up and delivery.
- Reached out to the owners of the Chowder Pot to let them know that the town is interested in having them relocate here.
- Nothing major coming before P&Z
- Warehouse project on Scannell and Kennedy Roads is on hold
- Someone is interested in the Krawski property
- The Barry Equipment building is up and they will be pouring concrete in March or April. The warehouse is planned to open mid-summer. There is equipment at the front of the site after a warehouse inspection and Mr. Roberts shared the documents on where equipment can be displayed. He is working on getting it figured out with Ms. Lipe.
- New Peoples Bank location includes the possibility of additional free-standing buildings.

Commissioner Jeski asked if the company from South Carolina has made a decision yet. Mr. Roberts reported that Mr. Maniscalco spoke to them and they are still interested in locating somewhere between Boston and NYC but haven't made a final decision.

10. General Discussion: Commissioner Lewis shared that the Talbot Lane neighbors have introduced EDC letter of support for the warehouse project into the lawsuit.

Vice Chairperson P. Burnham stressed the need to know what direction the town wants to move in to bring in economic development. He also shared that the recently approved budget statement includes the hiring of an economic development coordinator.

11. Executive Session: None.

12. Adjournment: Adjournment: A **motion** to adjourn at 8:30pm was made by Commissioner Lewis and **seconded** by Commissioner Murray and was ***unanimously approved. Motion passed.***

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Potter
Commission Clerk