

MINUTES

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
COUNCIL CHAMBERS/VIRTUAL
SOUTH WINDSOR TOWN HALL**

**REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 2021
TIME: 7:00P.M.**

PRESENT: Chairperson Paul Burnham, Linda Jeski, Louise Neary, Joseph Kennedy, James Murray, Susan Burnham, Alternates Mindy Lewis (sat for David Marsh) and Robert Burns (Scott Kelley)

ABSENT: Edwina Futtner, David Marsh, Bill Jodice, Scott Kelley, Alternates Victor Dorobantu and Wayne Kilburn

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant Town Manager Scott Roberts

- 1. Call Meeting to Order:** Chairperson Paul Burnham called the meeting to order at 7:10p.m.
- 2. Roll Call:** The above-mentioned members were introduced.
- 3. Special Presentation:** Original project for All-Phase building is on hold but there may be another project moving interested in the building.
- 4. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from Regular Meeting on 4/28/21: A **motion** to approve the minutes of April 28, 2021 with the following corrections was made by Commissioner S. Burnham and **seconded** by Commissioner Jeski and was ***unanimously approved.***
Motion passed.

Page 1. Item 3. Special Presentation should read: "...Ms. Wagner replied that it would run 5 days a week, 7am-10pm."

Page 2. Item 5. (b). Follow-up Discussion on Tax Abatements should read: "...that companies that are given tax abatements are not complying..."

5. Old Business

- a. Mayor TV:** Mr. Roberts reported that they will be reviewing the script during a meeting with the production team on Tuesday, June 1 to then turn it into the first iteration of the video. The town will be looking at the creation of the video differently, working to make sure it is community inclusive, with both small and large businesses. All footage of the schools has been reshot and they will try to find a way to include Pleasant Valley and the architectural rendering once it's finished. Mr. Roberts hopes that the ideas for the rough draft will be done on Tuesday and he'll let Chairperson P. Burnham know when the first draft is ready.

Chairperson P. Burnham hopes to have the new video ready for viewing at the June meeting. Commissioner Neary recalled that the original Mayor TV video was much larger and asked if connections had been severed or if they are still being used. Mr. Roberts replied that the town is using a company called CGI.

- b. Follow-up Discussion on Tax Abatements:** Mr. Roberts provided an update. He took the lead from the town manager's comments and reviewed the current process documentation. The full process wasn't known to a lot of people, but now with the use of the permitting software, Viewpoint. The software prompts an applicant through the process of applying for a permit and he looked at whether it could be used for tax abatement applications. He created a step-by-step process using the software and will use this new process with a company interested in applying for an abatement to test for viability. Town staff will be notified by the software when signatures or other information is needed to move the application forward depending upon what is input by the applicant. A laser fiche-document management system will warehouse all of the paperwork for each tax abatement application for future reference. At June's meeting, Mr. Roberts should be able to provide an update and share the manual he created for town staff to follow for the tax abatement process. Commissioner Kennedy asked if the 3 Scannell properties are still under tax abatement since someone else bought them. Mr. Roberts replied that the original tax abatement agreement was with Scannell but that the new owner could come to the town and request an abatement if they are interested especially since the building is in such disrepair. Commissioner Jeski asked about the status of the tax abatement for Carla's Pasta and if it could be transferred even though they owe back taxes and there is a lien on the building. She doesn't believe it should be because the new owners haven't gone through the steps. Mr. Roberts stated that Carla's Pasta lost their tax abatement when they became delinquent in their taxes but that he isn't sure what's going to happen as a result of the court proceedings. It is possible that the new owner will be eligible to have the tax abatement reinstated by the courts once they've met all other obligations.

Mr. Roberts informed the commission that abatement information for current and past agreements will be searchable on the new EDC website to make it easier to keep track of and check on the status of each.

6. Committee Report(s): None.

- 7. New Business:** Mr. Roberts projected images of the new EDC website for the commission to view. He stated that the new website will have a different domain than .gov because an EDC site cannot be hosted on one. Since the website is not yet live, the images were viewed in a linear fashion as follows:

- The section will be a drone video shot over the CT River and the treetops lining it, over adjacent pastures and then Evergreen Walk.
- The next section will contain information on the history of South Windsor.

- The third section will contain demographics of the town.
- The fourth section will contain location information such as the proximity to major cities and highways. Commissioner Burns suggests including information on the proximity to Hartford and area airports.
- The fifth section will contain images of the logos for Fortune 500 companies that are already located here. These include: Coca-Cola, FedEx, Dunkin' Donuts, L.L. Dean, Aldi, Macy's, Hyundai, Home Depot, Costco Wholesale, and Ted's Montana Grill. Commissioner Murray would like to see other types of businesses represented other than the distribution centers. Chairperson P. Burnham suggested that the graphic could change each month to include other businesses. Mr. Roberts suggested that several images could be created that website visitors could scroll through to view local, national, and international businesses already located here.
- The sixth section will contain information about housing including images and information about HarborChase and Tempo of Evergreen Walk.
- The seventh section contains information on current and recent economic development projects just as the new Home Depot and its railway, and project highlights from Geissler's Plaza, Evergreen Walk, and Buckland Commons.
- The eighth section contains information about town amenities.
- The ninth and final section includes a message from the Town Manager and the Mayor TV videos.

Commissioner S. Burnham would like entertainment information included and restaurants rotated through but Mr. Roberts explained that the town needs to be careful to not promote one business over another and the difficulty of keeping track of which businesses have been highlighted without showing preference. Mr. Roberts reminded commissioners that the EDC website is for companies to learn more about coming to town but that he might possibly be able to include a diversity of available dining options. Commissioner Burns asked who the target audience is for the website since A-list companies probably aren't going to visit this site. Mr. Roberts replied that the town is targeting companies with 150-200 employees, especially those that are looking for better value for the employees, better options for distribution, and those willing to rehab existing buildings. Commissioner Jeski recalled that the Chamber had put together a list of businesses, Discover South Windsor and Commissioner S. Burnham replied that it was a big undertaking. Commissioner Jeski believes that the commission needs to focus on exactly what they want to accomplish with the website. Mr. Roberts agrees that it is difficult to maintain the accuracy of some information, such as restaurants, and that it is better to use tools already in existence such as Google. Chairperson P. Burnham stated that the website needs to be friendly enough for existing businesses to make use of it. Mr. Roberts replied that the tax abatement process will be user-friendly and responsive to applicant information as it's input, making it easier for everyone. Commissioner Jeski asked if information on the tax abatement process be available to everyone and Mr.

Roberts stated that the commission could review the process that's been developed to see if the town is still pursuing the types of businesses it wants. Chairperson P. Burnham asked when the new EDC site will it go live and Mr. Roberts responded that he hopes to have it up by the next meeting if there are no major objections.

A **motion** to move forward with developing the EDC website was made by Commissioner S. Burnham and **seconded** by Commissioner Jeski and was *unanimously approved. Motion passed.*

8. Economic Development Opportunities/Updates

a. Matthew Galligan, Economic Development Consultant: Absent

b. Scott Roberts, Assistant Town Manager: Mr. Roberts announced that P&Z approved the application for Educational Playcare located on Ellington Road. The construction estimate is \$1 million for the project. Chairperson P. Burnham asked if there is an update for the left turn lane at 1 Buckland Center and Mr. Roberts replied that he hasn't seen anything from the developer or from the Town Manager's office. Chairperson P. Burnham commented that Geissler's received a tax abatement to make improvements to their store in 2017 and asked if abatements be given as an incentive for companies to come to town. Mr. Roberts replied that tenants are not eligible for tax abatements because abatements are for real property but that he would look at the state statutes for further information.

c. Michael Maniscalco, Town Manager: Absent

d. Paul Burnham, Chairperson: Chairperson P. Burnham read aloud the letter he sent to P&Z in support for the Geissler's zone change. Commissioner Kennedy expressed his hope that P&Z approves the zone change.

9. General Discussion: Chairperson P. Burnham asked if for an abatement request, the commission should meet in executive session, and Mr. Roberts replied that he could speak with the town attorney to see if it meets the definition. Mr. Roberts stated that most developers are willing to share as much information as they need to move forward with the process and that over the last few years, only one non-disclosure agreement had to be signed pertaining to a business coming to town. Mr. Roberts asked the commission about their thoughts on filming EDC meetings and if they're interested in doing it. He is asking because it is a staffing issue and the town would have to look at a staffing/job share plan. He announced that the town received a grant to turn the Madden room into a tv station but that at this time, public meetings are only occurring in town council chambers. Commissioner Kennedy suggests implementing time limits on speakers to keep meetings concise. Mr. Roberts suggested that volunteers could be used to operate the equipment but that reliability is important. Filming meetings would provide the ability for the public to see their government in action. Commissioner Jeski stated that pre-pandemic, the commissions were scheduled to be filmed, and that most meetings were quick. Chairperson P. Burnham wants to wait to begin filming until meetings can be moved down to the Madden room and that he believes presentations are longer when they're on

film. Commissioner Jeski reiterated that presenters could be given a time limit. Chairperson P. Burnham stated that the consensus is that most people don't care one way or the other about filming the meetings.

10. Executive Session: None

11. Adjournment: A **motion** to adjourn at 8:30pm was made by Commissioner S. Burnham and **seconded** by Commissioner Jeski and was **unanimously approved. Motion passed.**

Next meeting is June 23, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Potter
Clerk