

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2009 AT 7:30 A.M.
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL – 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET
ROOMS 207 / 209**

Commissioners Present:

Chairman Brian Miller, Lelah Campo (departed at 8:30 a.m.), Kathleen Gannon and Arthur Hostage

Commissioners Absent:

Justin Adinolfi, Bea Fiorino and Richard Kaplan

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

John Lesky, Liaison for the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce; John O'Toole of Northeast Utilities (departed at 8:30 a.m.) and Bruce Blakey of Northeast Utilities (departed at 8:30 a.m.)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Miller called the meeting to order at 7:36 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was taken.

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

It was determined that a quorum was present until Ms. Campo left at 8:30 a.m.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 20, 2009 Regular Meeting

Tabled for the next meeting of the Economic Development Commission.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

A) Marketplace article of January 27, 2009

Ms. Gannon talked about the Public Radio Marketplace article regarding sharing an office that she submitted for the Commissioners to review.

VII. BUSINESS

A) Presentation by Northeast Utilities and Discussion Re: Connecticut Economy

Mr. Bruce Blakey, of Northeast Utilities, discussed the “2008 Connecticut Economic Review” by Northeast Utilities System. Mr. Blakey stated that Connecticut overall has a high income, a lot of jobs, some of which are in manufacturing. There are a great number of exports in Connecticut; there is a high per capita gross made product and high per capita manufacturing product, largely a result of the job mix in Connecticut.

Connecticut offers an excellent quality of life. The workers in Connecticut are highly skilled and highly productive workers. Connecticut remains among the top in the nation in per capita income.

Mr. Blakely talked about how the population of Connecticut changes with a consistent influx of new residents coming from overseas. In contract, it was noted that many of the younger members of the Connecticut population do not return after leaving for college.

Overall, Connecticut is a great place to live but has low employment growth. It is a wealthy state with highly productive workers. Mr. Blakey stated that the employment and population growth is lackluster due to the high business and living costs in Connecticut, particularly the housing costs. He also predicts that the overall U. S. economy will start to slowly turn around by the end of this year, although the unemployment rate is projected to continue to grow throughout the year; by 2010 it may reach the low 9%.

B) Meetings with Cheshire companies

Mr. Sitko has invited AIS to the next Economic Development Commission meeting.

C) West Main Street Commercial Area Streetscape Improvements Project Update

Mr. Sitko reported that bids are expected to start in the Spring for 30 – 35% of the West Main Street Project and after the culvert is replaced, the remainder of the project will move forward.

Milone & MacBroom and town staff are working with the State Department of Transportation and local public safety officials to design an area of refuge as a pedestrian crossing options.

D) Strategic Work Plan

Mr. Sitko met late last week with Chairman Miller and Sheldon Dill to discuss developing focus groups for the Strategic Work Plan. Home-based businesses, retail and restaurants, smaller service companies, landscapers and contractors, small manufacturers, distributors and the growers are areas of business in Town that these focus groups will start with. The main purpose of the groups is to get them to talk about "what they are doing" and then ultimately to find out if there is something the Town could do to make it easier for them to do their business. Ms. Gannon stated that she would be happy to join in the planning process to help develop questions for the groups.

Mr. Sitko is finalizing a letter about education and job training for the local businesses but is holding off as the changes or cuts are still coming out for the State budget.

E) Business Appreciation Day

Mr. Sitko has set the date for Business Appreciation Day as Wednesday, May 6th from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. at Elim Park with the guest speaker for the event, Todd Kallman, President of Commercial Engines and Global Services for Pratt & Whitney.

F) Grand List

The net Grand List for October 1, 2008 is \$2,821,979,070 and the news release from Town Manager Milone was included in the meeting's packet for Commissioners to review.

G) Liaison Reports

Mr. Lesky, Liaison for the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, talked about the Annual Meeting, held on January 22nd at the Farms Country Club. The guest speaker was Superintendent Greg Florio who explained that Cheshire spends very little on a per pupil basis, and gets very good results from them.

H) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko reported that there were a number of articles regarding Cheshire companies in the meeting's packet.

There has been some discussion regarding the Town's Sign Regulations, especially with regards to temporary signs and sign on vehicles.

Mr. Sitko reported that Bovano's property is for sale, which includes the Sweet Claude's property. The property is located in a C-3 zone.

I) Other

None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Miller adjourned the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary