

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2009 AT 7:30 A.M.
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL – 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET
ROOMS 207 / 209**

Commissioners Present:

Chairman Brian Miller, Justin Adinolfi, Bea Fiorino, Richard Kaplan and Thomas Scannell

Commissioners Absent:

Lelah Campo and Kathleen Gannon

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

John Lesky, Cheshire Chamber of Commerce Liaison; Jim Flood, President of Bovano of Cheshire (departed at 8:10 a.m.)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Miller called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called.

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

It was determined that a quorum was present.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 16, 2009 Regular Meeting

MOTION by Ms. Fiorino that the minutes from the June 16, 2009 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted as presented. **SECONDED** by Mr. Adinolfi.

VOTE: In Favor – Adinolfi, Fiorino, Kaplan, Miller and Scannell
Opposed – None

The motion passed 5 – 0.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

There are assorted news articles included in this meeting's packet for Commissioners to review.

VII. BUSINESS

A) Presentation Re: Bovano of Cheshire

Jim Flood was present at this morning's meeting to discuss his business, Bovano's of Cheshire, which is located on South Main Street, next to McDonald's.

Mr. Flood explained that his father started the business, which he now runs with his son. Mr. Flood stated that Bovano's is going through a very difficult time as a result of a tremendous loss of sales over the past three years but he is hopeful that the business will turn around soon.

Mr. Flood noted that he has been trying for about 8 years now to either move his manufacturing facility to another part of Town or to another town; trying to find a location that is better suited for the small operation he currently has. Currently, Bovano's operates out of a 14,000 square foot building in a commercial zone, plus an additional 4,000 square feet for the store. In addition, Mr. Flood owns the Sweet Claude's property.

As a result of the recent Aquifer legislation, which Mr. Flood has testified against at the State level, it seems to be a clear signal to him that Bovano's needs to be relocated into a better place, which is out of the Aquifer.

When asked if he is looking for bigger space with his proposed relocation, Mr. Flood stated no, the Aquifer is the key reason for wanting to get out of Bovano's current space. He added that he is 100% compliant and gone through an incredible 35 year process of removing anything harmful and Bovano's is one of only four companies in the State to receive a letter from Department of Environmental Protection Chairman McCarthy stating that the property is 100% clean. Being located on the Aquifer prohibits activities and expansion of activities, however if you register your activity you are granted approval for 5 years.

Mr. Flood went back to say that trying to find a new location, preferably in Cheshire considering the name of the company is Bovano's of Cheshire, has been very difficult, most of it is financial with trying to find a place that would work.

Chairman Miller asked if a new manufacturing site were found, would the Bovano's store remain where it is today? Mr. Flood replied, yes, which is one of the reasons he is here this morning.

Mr. Flood stated that he wants to talk to an architect at Milone and MacBroom about developing the current Bovano's of Cheshire property. About 10 years ago an architect developed concept plans for a "Gateway to Cheshire" to develop the whole parcel. The concept plan would keep the historic nature of the buildings but bring it to a more commercial, usable space. The front building, which houses the store, is about 9,000 square feet so a little more than half of the building could be used for additional retail space as well as keep Sweet Claude's as it exists. In addition, the back building, which is approximately 8,000 square feet, could be developed as well, in keeping with Cheshire's historic look. Mr. Flood stated that he has a picture of the center building from 1860 when it was a copper refinery for copper mined here in Town. Historically, Mr. Flood stated that he didn't think it was worth much, but it would be nice to keep it.

Mr. Flood commented that Bovano's of Cheshire is a one of a kind business in this country; there is no one else that makes products like them. Bovano's shows in international trade shows, so they know there is no one that can compete with them, even the Chinese.

Mr. Flood stated that the people of Cheshire support Bovano's store, incredibly, there is a fantastic customer base that keeps the store "humming along" and it's in a great location. He then talked about the phases involved in moving the manufacturing process out of its current location. Mr. Flood also stated that his property on South Main Street is up for sale but in this economy there is not a lot of activity. He has looked in Waterbury, Southington and Meriden for possible new manufacturing sites for Bovano's as well as Cheshire, but with no luck so far. Initially, Mr. Flood would like to lease a 15,000 to 20,000 square foot facility to move his manufacturing division into or as low as 10,000 to 12,000 square feet depending on the building. Mr. Flood noted that Bovano's is a 100% compliant hazardous waste generator, which is not always that appealing to a landlord, even though it is a very safe operation.

Bovano's of Cheshire's products can be found in approximately 1,500 stores nationwide as well as some stores internationally.

Mr. Flood asked what this Commission thought about the concept of developing the South Main Street property, which he feels will add a nice flair to the Town. Chairman Miller stated that he thought it was a terrific concept; the property is, in his opinion, a little under utilized, commercially. It could be developed more commercially with a few other buildings and a walking area, using Bovano's as a flag ship store. Mr. Sitko added that a good mix of stores, provided it's not a retail box store, would be ideal.

Commissioners agreed that they would like to stay involved and up to date on Mr. Flood's possible plans to develop his South Main Street property as well as his search for a new manufacturing facility. There was talk of trying to coordinate a project with the possible refurbishment of McDonald's and the new Dollar Tree store. Mr. Flood stated that he thought it would be another 2 or 3 weeks before he had the next set of plans from Milone and MacBroom for the potential development project.

Mr. Adinolfi asked about the number of employees at Bovano's of Cheshire. Mr. Flood replied that in 1999 there were approximately 45 people and now they are down to 21 or 22 people, 10 of which are on the manufacturing side, down from a high of 25.

Chairman Miller thanked Mr. Flood for attending this morning's Economic Development Commission meeting.

B) Meetings with Cheshire companies

Mr. Sitko suggested invited Macy's to a future Economic Development Commission meeting to see how they are doing in this economy. Mr. Adinolfi suggested invited a local developer to a future meeting after hearing that it is difficult to find commercial locations in Town.

C) Focus Group Meetings

Chairman Miller stated that the first Focus Group meeting was held earlier this month and included home-based businesses. There was a very good attendance with a lively discussion that lasted about 90 minutes, Sheldon Dill moderated the meeting. Issues discussed were financing, marketing and visibility which provided a forum for participants to share ideas and experiences. Of the 75 businesses invited, representatives from 10 businesses attended.

The next Focus Group will likely be held in September and will include retailers and restaurants.

D) West Main Street Commercial Area Streetscape Improvements Project Update

Mr. Sitko stated that the final design, including the island of refuge, is up at the State Department of Transportation for their approval for the West Main Street crossing. The Committee is also working to prepare the first phase of the project to go out to bid soon.

The Town Manager has asked Milone and MacBroom to develop estimated costs for expanding the Linear Trail to West Main Street from Cornwall Avenue as well as from West Main Street to Jarvis Street. The Committee is looking into possible grant funds that could be used to help with the extension costs.

E) Discussion Re: Proposed Capacity Fee for Connection to Sanitary Sewer System

Mr. Sitko stated that the Water Pollution Control Authority has approved the Capacity Fee for connection to the sanitary sewer system. He also stated that he has not heard back from the Public Works Director, after repeated requests from himself and this Commission, regarding the example to analyze surrounding town's sewer fees.

Chairman Miller and Mr. Sitko are suggesting that this be looked at again during the Town Incentive program review next Spring.

Chairman Miller noted that despite the Water Pollution Control Authority's minutes stating there had been no response, the Economic Development Commission had responded to the Water Pollution Control Authority, through Staff, and thought that the information provided from the WPCA was inadequate and did not answer the question as to what the potential competitive environment is because it compared "apples to oranges". Chairman Miller asked if the Town Council has had any discussion on the Capacity Fee and Mr. Sitko stated that he did not believe so.

F) Liaison Reports

Ms. Fiorino commented that the Town Beautification Committee would like to develop the landscaping for the rear of the Cheshire Public Library and are working on a landscape plan to develop the main entrance area of Town Hall with decorative walls and plantings.

Mr. Lesky, Liaison from the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, commented that the Chamber's Golf Tournament is next Monday and the Fall Festival will be the second Saturday in September.

H) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko reported that he, Chairman Miller, Town Manager Milone and Sheldon Dill attending the ceremonial start-up of a 300 kW solar array at Alexion Pharmaceuticals.

Campion Ambulance has started construction for their 2,500 square foot facility on the corner of Highland Avenue and Country Club Road with a couple of bays and an office.

Dollar Tree's site plan modification was recently approved for the former Home Fabric Mills property; McDonald's has submitted plans for a new building on their property, which the Commission reviewed. The proposal is to go from a 4,300 square foot building down to 3,900 square feet with an expanded drive-thru, which is 60 to 70% of their business.

Lane Construction is going to be involved in a community project to paint the Cheshire Senior Center front porch.

Yankee Gas is seeking approval for a big expansion project that would run up West Main Street and could have some impact on the Streetscape project there.

I) Other

None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Fiorino to adjourned the meeting at 8:56 a.m.; **SECONDED** by Mr. Adinolfi.

VOTE: In Favor – Adinolfi, Fiorino, Kaplan, Miller and Scannell
Opposed – None

The motion passed 5 - 0.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary