

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
(held with the Economic Analysis Steering Committee)
Monday, November 14, 2016
7:30 a.m. – Room 207/209– Town Hall

Commissioners Present:

David Pelletier, Derek Gromko, Lou Nero, Ray Voelker, William Stanley, Steve Sidoruk.

Commissioner Absent:

Dan O'Connell

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

Rob Oris, Cheshire Town Council Chairman, Sheldon Dill, President, Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, Tripp Muldrow, Arnett Muldrow & Associates.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pelletier 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 – REGULAR MEETING – October 18, 2016

MOTION by Mr. Stanley that the minutes from the October 18, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted.

SECONDED by Mr. Voelker

The motion passed unanimously by all present.

Mr. Pelletier changed the meeting order to allow time for Mr. Muldrow's presentation.

VI. Communications

No communications were received.

VII. Business

a) December Meeting of the EDC

MOTION by Mr. Nero to cancel the December 20th EDC meeting and move it to December 5th.

Seconded by Mr. Stanley

The motion passed unanimously by all present.

This meeting will be a joint meeting with the project steering committee to review the Arnett Muldrow information.

b) Liaison Reports

There was nothing to report from the Chamber of Commerce.

c) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko provided a list of Cheshire small businesses that are supported by the Small Express Program. At least 30 businesses have taken part in the program.

Mr. Sitko reported that there are plans for two restaurants to come to Cheshire. One is Hibachi/Asian that will be located in the former Dress Barn in Maplecroft Plaza, and the other is Mexican to be located at 1156 Meriden-Waterbury Turnpike. In addition, Cheshire Pizza is going through extensive renovations and is scheduled to reopen soon.

There has been interest at the former Huxley Motor Cheshire Cinema site for a building. Developers, Mr. Milone, Mr. Sitko and Mr. Voelker have met and the hope is that the developers will return in several weeks.

The financial plan for Ball & Socket Arts was tabled at the town council meeting due to last minutes changes. The discussion will continue at the council meeting next month.

Different uses were discussed for the interchange zone including warehouse /distribution. Mr. Sitko talked about requesting a change to the planning and zoning regulations as an opportunity for the zone to attract more attention.

Mr. Sitko will email the proposal language for the modifications to the planning and zoning regulations to the commission members.

A follow up meeting with a representative from the DOT will be scheduled to discuss the reply letter from Commissioner James Redeker to Mr. Milone.

Today from 12:15 – 12:45pm the head of Trinity Healthcare will be at St. Mary's Hospital. The commission members were invited to attend.

d) Discussion with Arnett Muldrow Re: Economic Analysis

Mr. Muldrow explained that they are at the midpoint of the analysis. To summarize, observations, thus far, show that economic development requires a different approach because Connecticut has transitioned from a manufacturing state to a service state. Locals want growth without change. Retail dynamics don't favor major retail at the interchange zone. The farming community, a legacy business in Cheshire, has a unique status in town. Per state enterprise zone program, a portion of Cheshire is designated as a Defense Plant Zone.

Assets in town include stronger leadership, cooperation with schools and partnership with the chamber of commerce. The town is considered to be proactive and town staff is professional. Cheshire imports more jobs than it exports. There is a strong feeling of community, family, sports minded, kid minded. The town is stable, clean and relatively affluent. It is making revisions to the zoning regulations so that there is more flexibility in industrial/commercial zones. It allows easy access to metropolitan areas and cities. Elim Park is a strong and growing asset as is the chamber of commerce.

Challenges observed are no downtown area where people can gather, walk, shop and dine. Residents go to West Hartford and New Haven for that experience. Lack of diversified dining forces residents to leave town and go elsewhere. Central Connecticut is economically

challenged as it is between New York City and Boston. It is a difficult time to lease space. Development of the interchange zone will require major funding for utilities, i.e., water.

Opportunities mentioned were re-examining the interchange zone for other developmental opportunities. The Ball and Socket plant presents a great opportunity for the town. Its location is accessible to the linear trail and can be a focal point for gathering, shopping, and dining. Because healthcare services are expanding, the town should look at them. Economic development should be better communicated and citizens educated on opportunities.

Mr. Oris commented that a “floating zone” was created in East Windsor which promoted proactivity, protectiveness, and consideration of uses beyond industrial. For Cheshire a similar plan could allow development in increments. In addition, an economic feasibility plan should be in place as part of the marketing segment.

Five themes were presented based on assets, challenges and opportunities for economic development; developing the interchange zone, educating the community, creating a downtown, marketing to recruit new investment, and promoting growth.

Recommendations based on these themes include growth of the Grand List, ideas for the charter revision to coincide with economic development, and brainstorming with the Connecticut Main Street Program, Minnesota Arts and others. Another consideration is improvement in the certificate of occupancy process.

Forward Action

Between now and December 5th the draft written document will be in place and presented to the commission for review. Responsibilities will be assigned to the steering committee based on specific recommendations.

The commission asked Mr. Muldrow to include success stories from cities and towns in the final document.

Mr. Sidoruk mentioned a video prepared by Sonalyst about the Town of Cheshire which may serve as reference for a strategy and action plan.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Pelletier adjourned the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

Dawn Guite
Recording Secretary
Economic Development Commission