

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
(held with the Economic Analysis Steering Committee)
Friday December 16, 2016
7:30 a.m. – Room 207/209 – Town Hall

Commissioners Present:

David Pelletier, Derek Gromko, Dan O'Connell, Lou Nero, Steve Sidoruk,
William Stanley

Commissioner Absent:

Ray Voelker

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

Michael Milone, Town Manager, Don Dobbs, Executive Vice President, Lane Construction, 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 – SPECIAL MEETING – November 14, 2016

MOTION by Mr. O'Connell that the minutes from the November 14, 2016 Special Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted.
SECONDED by Mr.Sidoruk.

The motion passed unanimously by all present.

VI. Communications

The 2017 Economic Development Commission Meeting Dates were distributed to the members present. The Commission meets the third Tuesday of the month at 7:30 a.m. in Room 207/209 at the Town Hall, 84 South Main Street, unless otherwise noted. 2017 Meeting dates are: January 17, 2017, February 21, 2017, March 21, 2017, April 18, 2017, May 16, 2017, June 20, 2017, July 18, 2017, August 15, 2017, September 19, 2017, October 17, 2017, November 21, 2017, December 19, 2017, January 16, 2018.

VII. Business

- a) Discussion with Arnett Muldrow Re: Economic Analysis

Mr. Tripp Muldrow presented four key recommendations to support the Economic Development Strategy and corresponding timeframes for accomplishment. The recommendations are: Developing the North End, Telling the Story, Building a Sense of Place, and Fostering the Environment.

Developing the North End

This is the largest area for economic development. It is also the key employment area in town. It represents the potential for ongoing investment because it is accessible to the interchange of Route 10 with Interstate 691. In addition, the interchange is a premier location for development because of undeveloped property in several quadrants. Parcels and buildings along Route 10 and in or near the business parks also represent strong potential for ongoing investment. It will continue to be what fuels the grand list, stabilizes the tax base, provides regional employment, and balances land use in the community.

Telling the Story

Cheshire is a desirable town to live in. It has a high quality of life. It is in close proximity to the regional job market as well as being an economic development center for the region. While town residents primarily work in different areas of the state, others come to work in Cheshire. There are many buildings and sites suitable for future economic development. The town can be marketed to reflect this.

Building a Sense of Place – West Main Street

A clear walkable district will build a sense of place. Cheshire, currently, does not have this. The town green which encompasses government and historic institutions makes the area an important gathering place for residents.

However, this area, does not have a multitude of options for restaurants and retail.

West Main Street has recently undergone upgrades that have enhanced a pedestrian friendly environment. It is also bisected by the new Cheshire Trail and is also the home to the historic Ball and Socket property which is planned for a multi-use center for the arts.

The improvements to West Main Street and potential development for vacant and underutilized sites represent the best area to create a “downtown” district that is pedestrian friendly, accessible and good for investment.

Fostering the Environment

Stakeholders have expressed their interest in the proactive approach being taken toward the economic development in town. Those interviewed were recognized for their professionalism and for a fair yet demanding process. It is recommended that Cheshire continue to explore initiatives for continuous process improvement to build on successes that have already been achieved.

Forward Action

Detailed recommendations for short and long term strategies outlined by Mr. Muldrow will be reviewed by the Commissioners and lead people will be identified to act on this plan.

b) Liaison Reports

Mr. Gromko reported that the Chamber’s Silent Auction is scheduled tonight, December 16 at the Waverly Inn. Entry fee is \$25.00.

Membership in the Chamber is stable. The priority in 2017 is to grow the Chamber of Commerce.

c) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko provided the tentative meeting schedule for the Charter Revision Commission (as of November 21, 2016). The schedule included alternate or additional meeting dates if needed.

Mr. Sitko reported that two businesses are interested in or have located in Cheshire – Brian's Guitars and a jewelry store.

The new Cheshire Community Food Pantry is now open with larger storage areas, loading docks, and an office. It is located at 175 Sandbank Road, is 6,000 square feet, and will provide food for approximately 300 individuals. Mr. Sitko encouraged the members to stop by the facility.

The STEAP Grant application for a parking area off West Main Street for the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail was not selected for funding by the State of Connecticut. The funding requested exceeds what is available under the program. The town will reapply for funding, if available, in the future.

For information, Mr. Sitko included a copy of the October 2016 Connecticut Economic Digest which shows the Connecticut Town Economic Index (CTEI): 2010 – 2015. The Index shows towns and cities in the State which experienced economic improvement in 2015 and 2014.

Mr. Sitko included a Wall Street Journal article regarding population growth of suburbs versus cities. While big cities are getting a lot of attention, suburbs are holding their own in the battle for population and young earners. This is based on a study of population trends and housing from the Urban Land Institute's Terwilliger Center for Housing.

Mr. Sidoruk mentioned that a video prepared by Sonalyst in 2001 about the Town of Cheshire has been converted to DVD. The video's concept holds true now, as it did in the past.

The Interchange Zone and warehouse/distribution use will be tabled to January 2017.

The Town Council approved the Brownfield Grant for Ball & Socket Arts. Ball & Socket Arts must show financial ability to undertake Phase I of the project before funds are released.

VIII. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted:

Dawn Guite
Recording Secretary
Cheshire Historic District Commission