

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2012 AT 7:30 A.M.
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL – 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET
ROOMS 207 / 209**

Commissioners Present:

Chairman David Pelletier, Robert Formica, Kathleen Gannon, David Orsini, Robert Sepp and William Stanley

Commissioner Absent:

Brian Miller

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator and Joe Michelangelo, Director of Cheshire Public Works Department (departed at 8:20 a.m.)

Others Present:

Robert DeJongh, Liaison from the Inland / Wetlands Commission; James Redeker, Commissioner of Connecticut Department of Transportation (departed at 8:20 a.m.); Bill Bonaminio, Chairman of the Town Beautification Committee (departed at 8:20 a.m.); John Milone of Milone and MacBroom (departed at 8:20 a.m.)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pelletier called the meeting to order at 7:31 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 – March 20, 2012

MOTION by Mr. Sepp that the minutes from the March 20, 2012 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted as submitted. **SECONDED** by Ms. Gannon.

VOTE: In Favor – Formica, Gannon, Orsini, Sepp and Stanley
Opposed – None
Abstain – Pelletier

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 1.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications to the Economic Development Commission this month.

VII. BUSINESS

A) Discussion with CT Commissioner of DOT, James Redeker

Mr. Sitko and Commissioners welcomed James Redeker, Commissioner of Connecticut Department of Transportation to the Economic Development Commission meeting.

Commissioner Redeker stated that he was appointed by Governor Malloy in August 2011 and has been with the Department of Transportation since 2009. Before that, Commissioner Redeker worked for the New Jersey Transit Authority for 30 years. When it was time to move, Mr. Redeker chose Cheshire because of its central location.

Commissioner Redeker stated that the Department of Transportation at its height employed 5,000 but now there are 2,800 employees. He stated that he is extremely impressed with the small staff they have handling the transportation systems for the State of Connecticut. Some of the transit system expansions that are in the works are the New Britain to Hartford Bus way and high-speed railway between Springfield, MA and New Haven, CT.

Locally, Commissioner Redeker stated that the State Department of Transportation is working to finish the culvert work on West Main Street, which they should be done next month, noting that the paving will be starting on Friday. He also talked about the Linear Trail and his hopes that in 5 years the length of the Trail will have doubled and that more State or Federal funding will be available so that local towns won't be so financially responsible for completing the Trail sections.

Commissioner Redeker talked about his goal to change the public perception of the State Department of Transportation to one of the top departments for the State of Connecticut.

Mr. DeJongh asked about the possible re-installation of tolls in Connecticut? Commissioners Redeker stated that there is a prohibition on tolls today for pre-existing highways. There is a lot involved with planning where and how to place tolls and the State has received a grant to study Interstate 84 and Interstate 95 as to where tolls could be safely placed, how tolls can be collected and will it be beneficial to the State; this study should take 1 – 2 years to complete.

Chairman Pelletier asked if the Federal government looks at the “mix-master” of Route 8 and Interstate 84 in Waterbury as an important artery of transportation? Commissioner Redeker replied yes, but the Federal government doesn’t have any funds either.

Mr. Sitko commented that he has been working for a long time with the State Department of Transportation for the West Main Street project and everyone has been great to work with. He continued to say that the Economic Development Commission meets with local businesses and a big concern for many of them is public transportation to Cheshire. Commissioner Redeker stated that there are no transportation planners for the State Department of Transportation; right now 1 person handles that responsibility as a part of his job. Commissioner Redeker stated that he would be happy to meet with the Chamber of Commerce to review information on where transit needs are greatest in Cheshire.

Mr. Orsini asked about the bus way from New Britain to Hartford and why the State is receiving such push back? Commissioner Redeker explained that the bus way would help to alleviate the congestion on Interstate 84 into Hartford. Buses will run every 6 minutes, providing a rapid transit system. There will be feeders from regions into the rapid transit system. He also mentioned that all 24 bus service contracts for the State will be going out to bid at the same time, which has not been done before in Connecticut. He added that 6 of the bus contracts have not gone out to bid in 50 years.

Mr. Bonaminio, Chairman of the Town Beautification Committee came forward to talk to Commissioner Redeker about the cement wall on Route 10, across from 7-Eleven. Mr. Bonaminio stated that the wall needs to be re-surfaced and some type of improvement. Commissioner Redeker replied that he would look into it and asked Mr. Bonaminio to email him so they could see what they can come up with for ideas for the wall.

Mr. Milone of Milone and MacBroom came forward to ask Commissioner Redeker if he anticipated that design build will happen for the State of Connecticut? Commissioner Redeker replied that he hopes it makes it through the session because it’s a tool the State could use and has been around for centuries. He added that the unions are fighting the design build concept although Commissioner Redeker would like to see it used.

Members thanked Commissioner Redeker for coming to speak to the Economic Development Commission this morning.

B) Speakers for Future Meetings

Mr. Sitko suggested inviting New York Graphic Society to come to the May 2012 meeting.

C) Work Plan for 2012 - 2013

Chairman Pelletier thanked the subcommittee for their work on putting together the Economic Development Commission's Work Plan for 2012 – 2013, noting they have done a great job putting the report together. Chairman Pelletier suggested breaking down into 3 subcommittees, which could hand the majority of the proposed projects and he asked Mr. Sitko to prioritize the Work Plan for the next Economic Development Commission meeting.

D) Focus Group Report

Mr. Sitko suggested sending a copy of the Focus Group Report to all those that participated in the Focus Group meetings, to which Commissioners agreed would be a good idea.

E) West Main Street Commercial Area Streetscape Improvement Project

Mr. Sitko stated that the culvert replacement on West Main Street is done and now the bridgework, roadwork and island of refuge need to be finished. Once they are done, the streetscape improvements around the culvert will be completed.

With regards to the expansion of the Linear Trail, the Town is responsible for the West Main Street to Jarvis Street section and the initial design work has begun. The portions that the Connecticut Department of Transportation are responsible for will hopefully be started in 2015.

F) Pratt & Whitney Property

Mr. Sitko stated that there has been some interest recently in the former Pratt & Whitney property on Knotter Drive, one of which is an out of state company. The company is currently working with the Connecticut DECD regarding an incentive package to move to Connecticut. The same company is also considering a building in North Haven; Mr. Sitko hopes to know more soon.

G) Election of Officers

Chairman Pelletier suggested that Ms. Gannon and Mr. Sepp make up a subcommittee for the election of officers for the Economic Development Commission and report back next month.

H) Liaison Reports

Mr. DeJongh commented that the Inland / Wetland Commission has been rather quiet.

I) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko talked about the possible development of the former Ball & Socket property on West Main Street by a local group with a focus on the arts that has received a \$1.7 million loan from the State and has asked the Town to apply for Brownfield remediation funding. Mr. Sitko noted that no deal has been finalized between the group and owner of the property, Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Sitko talked about the former Brix Restaurant property, which was sold and will be re-opening as another restaurant, Luca. It is expected to open soon. FroYoWorld is coming to Cheshire in the former Holly's Hallmark location in the Maplecroft Plaza. Unfortunately over the past month or so 3 local businesses have closed: Owen's Deli, West Main Grill and Yellowfins.

Mr. Sitko stated that the Chamber of Commerce held their annual Home and Garden Expo on April 14th; it was very successful and the Chamber did a great job.

Mr. Sitko informed the Commission that Richard's Chevrolet is expanding and renovating their property. Mr. Bowman is continuing his work on the Keeler House on South Main Street but has put the new construction building next door on hold for now.

Mr. Sitko stated that it is expected that W/S Development will come in soon for a permit extension. He noted that they have maintained their Chamber of Commerce membership. Mr. DeJongh asked when W/S Development's Wetland permit will expire and Mr. Sitko replied that he did not know.

J) Other

None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Stanley to adjourned the April 17th meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:333 a.m.; **SECONDED** by Ms. Gannon.

VOTE: In Favor –Formica, Gannon, Orsini, Pelletier, Sepp and Stanley
Opposed – None

The motion passed 6 - 0.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary