

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2012 AT 7:30 A.M.
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL – 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET
ROOMS 207 / 209**

Commissioners Present:

Chairman David Pelletier, Brian Miller, Robert Sepp, Steve Sidoruk and William Stanley

Commissioner Absent:

Robert Formica and David Orsini

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

Arthur Hostage, former Economic Development Commissioner; Robert DeJongh, Liaison from the Inland / Wetlands Commission; Ramona Burkey, Director of the Cheshire Public Library

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman 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. WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONERS STEVE SIDORUK

Commissioners welcomed Steve Sidoruk to the Economic Development Commission. Steve served almost 30 years on the Cheshire Police Department, retiring as the Deputy Police Chief in 2005. He has lived in Cheshire since 1965 and Mr. Sidoruk's wife is a Science teacher at Cheshire High School. Mr. Sidoruk stated that he was a marketing

major at Bryant College and has an interest in “green” energy. He looks forward to giving back to Cheshire and having a positive impact on the Commission.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 16, 2012

MOTION by Mr. Sepp that the minutes from the October 16, 2012 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted as submitted. **SECONDED** by Mr. Pelletier.

VOTE: In Favor – Miller, Pelletier, Sepp and Stanley
Opposed – None
Abstained - Sidoruk

The motion passed 4 – 0 - 1.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

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

VIII. BUSINESS

A) Discussion with Library Director Ramona Burkey

Mr. Hostage, Chairman Pelletier and Commissioners welcomed Cheshire Public Library Director, Ramona Burkey, to the Economic Development Commission meeting.

Ms. Burkey talked about the influence that her local public library played in shaping her future with the public library. She stated that local public libraries are a catalyst for local economic development, not just the physical development but also developing creativity and education of the public.

The public library has allowed communities to access the latest media over the years, when perhaps it was not fiscally possible for most members of a community. Ms. Burkey estimates that the shared use of electronic collections is about a savings of \$ 10 million annually for 450,000 loaned out items, which doesn't include the shared data base access for its members. The range of the return on the investment for money invested into your local public libraries is about \$7.00.

The Cheshire Public Library's prime focus is birth to 5 or 6 years of age, providing early literacy activities for children and their families / care givers. The Library also does a lot with career and employment resources and workshops. There is resume and cover letter assistance available through the Cheshire Public Library available to members.

Ms. Burkey talked about community partnering and introduce the “Show Your Card Month” program that will be happening for the first time in December 2012. This program will allow Cheshire Public Library cardholders to enjoy a discount during the month of December at 30 businesses in Cheshire just by showing their library card. This program was designed to increase foot traffic to local Cheshire businesses and to increase awareness of the Cheshire Public Library. As an example, Wells Fargo Bank will be giving out a small box of chocolate to anyone that comes into the Cheshire Branch and shows their Cheshire Public Library card.

Ms. Burkey asked Commissioners what could the Cheshire Public Library do to better serve Cheshire’s businesses and Cheshire’s economic development prospects? Mr. Sepp asked Ms. Burkey to discuss some of the business databases that are available through the Cheshire Public Library.

Ms. Burkey explained that there is access to Consumer Reports, Morning Star, the Census, Newspaper archives, Thomas Register, Reference USA, the Business Listings, etc. When asked, Ms. Burkey stated that yes searches can be done by SIC codes, when asked if that is an option at the Library.

Ms. Burkey also asked for suggestions on how to make the Cheshire Public Library services more widely known to local businesses. Chairman Pelletier suggested that after the first of the year this Commission and the Cheshire Public Library put together an advertisement in the Cheshire Herald to the business owners to try to make the businesses more aware of the services available to them.

Mr. Miller asked what Ms. Burkey envisions a local library to look like 10 to 20 years from now? Ms. Burkey stated that e-books are still only 1 or 2% of their borrowed items right now and 99% physical items. The Library is a place for community gathering and to gain expert guidance to navigate to find the information on the Internet that you need.

Mr. Hostage talked about what a great resource the Library is for the community for access to computers and the internet, from 9:30 am until 9 pm Monday through Friday as well as some weekend hours.

Mr. Sitko mentioned that the Cheshire Public Library recently underwent an update and re-design. He asked how things are working out since there was no expansion to the building or parking area? Ms. Burkey replied that she doesn’t see an immediate need for more building space but the parking is always an issue. There is an agreement with the church next to the Library that allows patrons to use their back parking area but that means managing the Library schedule as to not conflict with the church’s schedule of activities but there are still times that parking isn’t easily available.

Chairman Pelletier suggested that at the next Business Appreciation Day that the Cheshire Public Library could have a table set up to discuss and show off the services that are available for businesses. Commissioners agreed that it was a great idea.

Members thanked Ms. Burkey for coming to speak to the Economic Development Commission this morning and stated that they looked forward to the "Show Your Card" campaign in December.

B) Speakers for Future Meetings

Chairman Pelletier suggested that Economic Development Commission invite Mr. Voelker, the Town Planner to the next Commission meeting. He also suggested that a representative of Trailblazer (Denali) be invited to the January 2013 meeting.

C) West Main Street Commercial Area Streetscape Improvement Project

Chairman Pelletier reported that the West Main Street Commercial Area Streetscape project is just about wrapped up. There was a gathering a couple weeks ago with the businesses and property owners in the area, which was pretty well attended, to talk about the remaining items to be completed in the project. The contractor hopes to be done by December 1st with the final "punch list" of items. There will be 5 last planters placed next week to finish up the project. Mr. Sitko noted that there has been some damage to the granite curbing on the island of refuge but he was not sure when it occurred.

There will be some money leftover from this project, which depending on what is left; there may be some additional planters purchased and perhaps some signage for the area and a bench or two.

D) Main Street Investment Fund Grant Program

Mr. Sitko stated that he prepared a grant application for \$500,000 from the State of Connecticut's Main Street Investment Fund. If the funds are received, it would be used to improve the sidewalks from Grove Street on West Main Street up to Maple Avenue, on the north side of West Main Street. A response on the grant will not be known until next year.

E) Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program

Chairman Pelletier stated that there was information in this meeting's packet regarding Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program, which sounds like a very interesting program and something that he feels the Commission should get behind. The idea of the program is a way for businesses to finance energy improvement projects through an additional tax assessment, which the Town turns back over to pay. Mr. Sitko talked about the meeting he attended regarding this program. He stated that some towns in Connecticut have already signed up for the program and there are similar programs offered nationwide. This program is not for new construction but rather it is for existing buildings right now. Mr. Sitko stated that

he spoke to the Town Tax Collector and he does not have a problem with the program, adding that the program would be handled almost like a sewer lien is handled right now. The challenge that towns face is not knowing how much of a draw the program will have to determine the impact it will have on the Town. Commissioners agreed they were supportive of the PACE Program.

F) Treatment Plant Upgrade Project

Chairman Pelletier stated that the Water Pollution Control Authority's proposed Plant expansion was approved by the voters by a wide margin. The Capital Budget includes a proposed \$32,150,000 for the Waste Water Treatment Plant upgrade.

G) Liaison Reports

Mr. DeJongh reported that the Inland Wetland Commission has stayed pretty quiet over the last few months with respect to local businesses. He also talked about how fair and dedicated Suzanne Simone is on the Town Staff for the Inland Wetland Commission and the Town.

H) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko reported that EDAC has started to move into their Knotter Drive location, former Pratt building. Once they are completely in the building and the State certifies them they will be able to take advantage of the Defense Zone benefits.

There was an article in the packet regarding Alexion; they continue to expand their Cheshire location and upgrade the parking lot. Mr. Sitko is hopeful that after their new headquarters is built in New Haven they will continue to operate a division in Cheshire.

GC Electric was just approved for a 5,000 square foot warehouse at 1437 Highland Avenue and will renovate a house for their office. Mr. Sitko did talk to GC Electric regarding the Small Business Express program, which they appreciated.

Marbridge Retirement Center will be expanding, although Mr. Sitko was not sure how much yet. They did receive a Zone Text Change approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission recently.

Last week a number of the businesses on West Main Street came together for a Holiday Block Party and hope to expand it next year, mostly as a result of streetscape improvements to the area.

Business Appreciation Day is already in the planning stages. Mr. Sitko will be working with Mr. Dill for the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, Chairman Pelletier and Mr. Hostage as well as another representative from the Chamber to make up the

Business Appreciation Day Committee. Mr. DeJongh mentioned that he may be interested in serving on that committee.

With regards to the Farmington Canal Greenway, the Town is responsible for the West Main Street to Jarvis Street expansion. Milone and MacBroom is working on the engineering for that stretch, construction is expected to start in 2014. The State of Connecticut has done all of their survey work for their portion of the expansion from Cornwall Avenue to West Main Street and Jarvis Street to the Southington town line. No conclusion has been made on the Dalton stretch of the expansion yet.

Hostess Bakery has 40 – 42 jobs in Cheshire on Sandbank Road in a 12,400 square foot space. The bakers are in mediation with the company, so right now nothing is happening. The tax implications for Cheshire are a loss of \$3,500 in personal property and motor vehicles.

Mr. Sitko stated that he sent Jake's Wayback Burger some information they had requested but he has not heard back from them to discuss further.

Denali, an outdoor sporting store, opened earlier this month in its fourth Connecticut location in Maplecroft Plaza, in the former Rite Aid location.

I) Other

Mr. Hostage talked about the increasing use of robots, which we will see more and more of in the future. It is projected that robots will take over 35 million jobs in America in the next decade or two or three. Mr. DeJongh noted that there is a Robotics Club at Dodd Middle School that perhaps a representative could come to speak to this Commission.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Stanley to adjourned the November 20th meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:40 a.m.; **SECONDED** by Mr. Sepp.

VOTE: In Favor – Miller, Pelletier, Sepp, Sidoruk and Stanley
Opposed – None

The motion passed 5 - 0.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary