

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2013 AT 7:30 A.M.
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL – 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET
ROOMS 207 / 209**

Commissioners Present:

Chairman David Pelletier, Brian Miller, David Orsini (arrived at 7:38 a.m.), Robert Sepp, Steve Sidoruk and William Stanley

Commissioner Absent:

Robert Formica

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator and Michael Milone, Town Manager (departed at 7:55 a.m.)

Others Present:

Arthur Hostage, former Economic Development Commissioner; Alissa DeJonge, Director of Research from Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. (departed at 8:30 a.m.); Carmel Ford, Research Analyst from Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. (departed at 8:30 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 – February 19, 2013

MOTION by Mr. Sepp that the minutes from the February 19, 2013 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted as submitted. **SECONDED** by Mr. Sidoruk.

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

The motion passed 5 – 0.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Pelletier reviewed the letter sent on behalf of the Economic Development Commission to Earl Kurtz III, Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission regarding the Plan of Conservation and Development for Cheshire. He also thanked Mr. Miller for his assistance with the letter.

VII. BUSINESS

A) Discussion with Alissa DeJonge and Carmel Ford of CERC

Chairman Pelletier and Commissioners welcomed Alissa DeJonge and Carmel Ford of Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. (CERC) to speak to the Commission about the economic outlook.

Ms. DeJonge began by talking about the global economy and the influence Italy, France and Cyprus will have in the Eurozone. There was discussion about the effects of the US Government Sequester with total spending cuts of \$85 billion in 2013 and over \$1.2 trillion over the next nine years. Connecticut will lose \$56 million in funding for education, job training and other workforce programs as a result of the Sequester.

Nationally, the unemployment rate decreased to 7.6% and non-farm employment increased by 88,000 in March. Average home prices increased 7.3% in the 12 months ending January 2013. It was noted that consumers are more pessimistic due to the Sequester and weak job increases resulting in a decreased consumer confidence rating.

Locally, Connecticut lost 5,700 jobs in February and the unemployment rate declined to 8%. After a review of the employment number changes by industry from 2005 – 2011 Commissioners discussed the manufacturing industry and how it has changed over the past 20 years with declining employment and limited interest from the younger work force.

Median sale prices of homes rose in five out of eight counties in Connecticut, including a 28% increase in New Haven County but sales fell by nearly 8% in February 2013 compared to February 2012.

Connecticut faces very difficult budget years in the coming years. Governor Malloy has announced \$43.8 million in budget cuts over the next two years with many cuts to social and health care programs. The Governor is also eliminating the PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) grant and a \$20,000 value car tax exemption.

Connecticut is still the richest state with a per capital income of \$58,908, which is a 1.9% increase from 2011 to 2012. In looking at Connecticut's population comparing 2000 to 2010 the under 49 population has decreased and the 50 and over population has risen.

Connecticut Department of Labor projects that health care and education jobs such as home health aids, medical assistants, preschool teachers and child care workers will all see an over 20% increase in employment projections by 2020.

Ms. DeJonge and Ms. Ford concluded that there is a rebirth in the housing and energy markets. The economy locally and world wide is still struggling with deficits, budget cuts and debts while trying to increase consumer confidence and retail spending.

Members thanked Ms. DeJonge and Ms. Ford of the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. for coming to speak to the Economic Development Commission this morning.

B) Speakers for Future Meetings

Mr. Sitko suggested inviting the new Director of Public Works, George Noewatne to a future meeting.

C) Property Assessed Clean Energy (C - PACE) Program

Mr. Sitko reported that the Town Council has referred the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program to their Planning Committee. When a meeting is scheduled to discuss this program, Mr. Sitko will notify Commissioners. Town Manager Milone suggested that the Planning Committee would likely be meeting in about 2 weeks.

D) Business Appreciation Day

Mr. Sitko reported that Business Appreciation Day will be held on June 6th at 7:30 a.m. at Elim Park. The guest speaker will be Cheshire resident and Quinnipiac University President John Lahey.

E) Election of Officers

Chairman Pelletier suggested that the election of officers be deferred until next month so that Mr. Miller and Mr. Sepp could put together proposed nominations for the Economic Development Commission officers. Commissioners agreed.

F) Liaison Reports

There were no liaisons present at this meeting of the Economic Development Commission.

G) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko reported that W/S Development is working on their final site plan so they can move forward on their proposed Lifestyle Center plans in the Interchange Zone. He expects that the plan will be submitted in the next month. After they are submitted Mr. Sitko will arrange for the Economic Development Commission to review the plans. He also noted that a retail plan for an outlet center is being proposed for Rentschler Field in East Hartford.

Mr. Sitko reported that Arby's, Goldsmith Art & Frame Gallery and Hometown Wine & Liquor have closed or will be closing soon. Willows Motorsports is planning to close and has put their property up for sale. The former Shangra Lee location will be the home of Food Works, which is a natural, organic, gluten free food store and will likely be opening in May or June.

New York Graphic Society is looking to bring 16 to 20 jobs to Connecticut from China.

Mr. Sitko informed the Commission that Bozzuto's is looking at possibly a large expansion on their existing property.

Housing Authority Insurance Group, located on Commerce Court, has 158 employees and is working on plans for a 40,000 square foot building expansion for their current location at the end of the cul-de-sac.

Mr. Sitko reported that he has applied on behalf of the Town of Cheshire for a \$250,000 National Recreation Trails Program grant that would help with the Town's Linear Trail expansion expenses.

The Town Council recently approved the Fiscal Year 2013 – 2014 Operating Budget with a \$1.35 million increase for the Town of Cheshire.

H) Other

None.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Pelletier to adjourned the April 16th meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:46 a.m.; **SECONDED** by Mr. Miller.

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

The motion passed 6 - 0.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary