

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2014 AT 7:30 A.M.
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL – 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET
ROOM 207/209**

Commissioners Present:

Chairman David Pelletier, Dan O’Connell, Lori Rusnack, Steve Sidoruk, William Stanley and Ray Voelker

Commissioner Absent:

Michael Ecke

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

Joseph Whitright of Paws Pet Resort & Spa (departed at 8:05 a.m.)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pelletier called the meeting to order at 7:34 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 November 18, 2014

MOTION by Ms. Rusnack that the minutes from the November 18, 2014 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted as submitted. **SECONDED** by Mr. Sidoruk.

The motion passed unanimously by all present.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications to the Economic Development Commission.

VII. BUSINESS

A) Discussion with Representative of Paws Pet Resort & Spa

Chairman Pelletier welcomed Joseph Whitright, Co-Owner of Paws Pet Resort & Spa to this morning's Economic Development Commission meeting.

Mr. Whitright stated that he and his wife have been in business for 8 years as owners of Paws Pet Resort & Spa. Prior to opening the business they did a lot of research on what works and is needed to run a successful pet daycare, luxury boarding and grooming facility. Mr. Whitright noted that it took a while to find a bank to finance their business plan but eventually Apple Valley Bank approved them for the loan to get started. Paws Pet Resort & Spa provides services such as overnight and day boarding of dogs, cats and other domestic animals, spa and salon services, day care, gourmet "pawstries" and made to order birthday cakes. Paws is located on East Johnson Avenue in an 11,000 square foot facility. A dog trainer rents space and which has turned into a great working relationship for both parties.

Mr. Whitright stated that his father owned Cheshire Manufacturing, where he worked as well. He saw in the 1970's and 1980's that a lot of manufacturing jobs went down south, which resulted some very difficult years. In 2000 Cheshire Manufacturing was downsized due to overseas competition.

Mr. Whitright went on to talk about Paws. He stated that at capacity, Paws can hold 100 dogs and 18 cats. There are heated floors, ceiling fans, televisions, toddler bedding and web cams available. Paws has about 7,500 clients, some that even come from Massachusetts. He stated that every holiday is sold out, way in advance. Paws has about 30 employees including 2 full time receptionists and 2 full time groomers; there are always 6-7 employees on duty at a time. Paws has an indoor and outdoor play area for the dogs, there are 22 luxury suites and the public is welcome to come in for a tour at any time. Mr. Whitright noted that they are always cleaning to keep the animals healthy and so there is never that "dog" smell in the facility.

Mr. Stanley asked how the new pet facility on East Johnson Avenue has impacted the business at Paws? Mr. Whitright informed the Commission that that other business has already closed up. Mr. Stanley asked if there is any other competition for Paws in the

area? Mr. Whitright replied that Cheshire Vet does board animals but many times they refer clients to Paws, too. He also noted that Paws does not have to advertising their business any more; word of mouth is now how new clients find out about them.

Mr. Sitko noted that Paws Pet Resort & Spa did receive a 3-year tax incentive when they first started. He added that it is a great looking building. Mr. Sitko noted that the Connecticut Floral Association is renting space in the front building of Mr. Whitright's property where floral classes will be starting in January. Mr. Whitright noted that he recently installed a new sign for this business and last year he planted 650 Christmas trees with an irrigation system on his property.

On a regular basis, Paws has about 35 dogs daily for daycare, most of which are from Cheshire. Year-round the weekends are busy for overnight stays and Summer weekends are usually sold out. The slower time at Paws is January, after the holidays. When asked, Mr. Whitright stated that there is no staff on the property over night but there are security cameras and smoke, fire and security system on the building. Mr. Whitright also stated that he lives close enough to the property that he can walk to work if he wanted to.

Mr. Sitko noted that Mr. and Mrs. Whitright attended the C-Pace breakfast meeting recently. Mr. Whitright stated that they are interested in solar power for their 11,000 square foot facility to help reduce their electrical costs of running parking lot lights, blowers and grooming equipment. He stated that he had solar panels installed at his home recently and his first bill in August was negative, with the air conditioning running in a 3,500 square foot home with a pool.

Mr. Whitright added that he likes to give back to the Community whenever he can. One example is he gives "Lights of Hope" warehouse space every year for their luminary event.

Mr. Whitright noted that he is looking into franchising options as he sees a need for pet resorts in such areas as by the casinos in Ledyard. It is definitely something he is exploring for the future.

Chairman Pelletier thanked Mr. Whitright for coming to speak with the Economic Development Commission this morning and wished him Happy Holidays and continued success at Paws Pet Resort & Spa.

B) Speakers for Future Meetings

Mr. Sitko noted that Mr. Mead, Facility Vice President of Macy's Logistics will be attending the January 2015 meeting and he will invite a representative from Conntech Products to the February Economic Development Commission meeting.

C) Business Appreciation Day

Mr. Sitko noted that the next Business Appreciation Day is scheduled for June 2015 and has been held at Elim Park since 2004. Unfortunately the dining area at Elim Park is scheduled for renovation and will not be available at that time to handle the event. Mr. Sitko stated that he contacted Lane Construction about possibly holding the event at their facility and they are interested in serving as the host but there are a lot of logistical problems such as having to bring in a caterer and coordinating parking. Mr. Sitko has recommended that Business Appreciation Day be held in September or October 2015 at Elim Park, rather than in June 2015 at Lane Construction. He will be looking for a volunteer or two after the 1st of the year to help plan the event and look for a guest speaker.

D) C-PACE

Mr. Sitko stated that a breakfast meeting was held December 11th at Paul's Restaurant with about 20 attendees that included property owners, town officials, representatives of Green Bank and the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce to discuss the C-Pace program. Mr. Sitko felt it was a good turn out for the 1st meeting and stated that there were a lot of good questions and a lot of interest in solar power financing. The Town will be doing a follow up mailing and maybe some advertising. Mr. Sitko noted that representatives from Lane Construction, Consolidated Industries and Microtec attended this breakfast meeting.

E) Program with Manufacturers and Cheshire Public Schools

Chairman Pelletier stated that he, Mr. Sitko and Mr. O'Connell met with Kelly Lenz last month to continue the discussion about linking manufacturers with public school students. Ms. Lenz would like to invite Mr. O'Connell to a meeting of the School / Business Partnership early next year so that school administrators and guidance personnel can hear from him about future opportunities in manufacturing and other fields. Ms. Lenz also told Mr. Sitko that the guidance personnel at Dodd Middle School are interested in having students tour local manufacturing facilities. Mr. Sitko will work with Ms. Lenz and the school personnel to put these tours together, hopefully in the Spring. Chairman Pelletier suggested that maybe the tours could be held after school hours to have parents participate as well and help dispel myths and perceptions of manufacturing. Mr. O'Connell noted that he thinks it is great to see an interest from the schools to bring kids in and involve them at looking at more options than just going to college. There are a lot of high-tech manufacturing jobs that will need to be filled in the near future or the jobs will go overseas and the United States will loose out.

F) Plan of Conservation and Development

Mr. Sitko stated that the Plan of Conservation & Development Committee of the Planning & Zoning Commission would like to meet with members of the Economic Development Commission to receive comments about the draft commercial and industrial chapters of

the Plan. Work on the revised Plan for Cheshire needs to be completed by July 2015. A tentative date of Wednesday, January 14th at 7:30 p.m. has been set for the EDC to meet with the Planning & Zoning Commission. Before the meeting, Mr. Sitko will provide Commissioners with a draft of some points to review relative to the Plan of Conservation & Development.

Chairman Pelletier suggested moving up the January 2015 Economic Development Commission meeting so that the members can review the points together. Mr. Sitko stated that the speaker for the January meeting was already confirmed but he will check with him to see if it's possible to change the date.

G) Liaison Reports

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

H) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko stated that W/S Development called the Town on Friday to inform them that Tanger Corporation has dropped out of the planned outlets for the north end of Cheshire. W/S stated that this change will not affect the plans and they still intend to go forward as they continue to be committed to this project. W/S Development continues to move forward with their Department of Transportation and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection permits. Spring 2016 is still the projected opening.

Mr. Sitko is researching new State grant programs for manufacturers to see if Cheshire can benefit.

Mr. Sitko invited all Commissioners to a Holiday party on Thursday, December 18th from 5:00pm to 7:00pm at Town Hall, he asked for any that wish to attend that they please let staff know.

The Cheshire Food Pantry received land from the State to build a new facility on Sandbank Road on the edge of the State prison property.

Mr. Sitko recently applied for another STEAP grant for funds to be used in expanding the sidewalks along West Main Street. Cheshire has already received one STEAP grant towards this project.

Mr. Sitko reported that Housing Authority Insurance has received a temporary Certificate of Occupancy for their new addition on Commerce Court and have begun moving in.

Mr. Sitko concluded by thanking everyone for their hard work this year and wished all the Commissioners the best for the Holidays.

l) Other

None.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Pelletier adjourned the December 16th meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:35 a.m. and wished a Happy Holiday season to everyone.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary