

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2015 AT 7:30 A.M.  
CHESHIRE TOWN HALL – 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
ROOM 207/209**

Commissioners Present:

Chairman David Pelletier, Derek Gromko, Dan O’Connell, Steve Sidoruk, William Stanley and Ray Voelker (arrived at 7:36 a.m.)

Commissioner Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

Sylvia Nichols from the CT Florist Association

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Pelletier called the meeting to order at 7:33 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 July 21, 2015

**MOTION** by Mr. O’Connell that the minutes from the July 21, 2015 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted as submitted. **SECONDED** by Mr. Stanley.

The motion passed unanimously by all present.

## **VI. COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no communications directly to the Economic Development Commission.

## **VIII. BUSINESS**

### **A) Discussion with Sylvia Nichols of the CT Florist Association**

Ms. Nichols was present to speak to the Economic Development Commission regarding the CT Floral Design School that was opened up earlier this year by the CT Florist Association. Ms. Nichols is a member and past president of the CT Florist Association as well as a long time owner of the former Window Box and current operator of the flower shop at Cheshire Nursery, in addition to her Town Council role for Cheshire.

CT Floral Design School is the only trade school in Connecticut for floral design and the only design school in the Northeast. They train students of all ages in management and design and understanding of flowers. It was noted that Connecticut's floral market accounts for an estimated \$100 million in annual sales.

Ms. Nichols explained that CT Floral Design School is an all volunteer organization. They hold 13-week programs, which were originally created in 2000 and held in multiple locations. Now they are excited to have one rental space for their training classes, which also holds online classes and tutorials for its students. The school is also working with the State Community College's Horticulture programs. The school charges students for the courses to help pay for the facility cost but the teachers are all volunteer and the school is run by individual floral business owners.

Ms. Nichols talked about the need to support local businesses so they can support the community. She stated that as the owner of Window Box for 28 years, she employed over 150 people over the years. Connecticut has approximately 1000 floral shops across the state. CT Floral Design School also does training from some of the "big box" stores floral departments.

Ms. Nichols distributed a flyer on some fun, evening classes that are open to the public for a small fee over the next few months, which can usually accommodate up to 50 students. Typically the Design School classes have 5 – 15 students per class, including students from out of state.

Mr. Gromko asked how much of an effect have the online floral websites had on the local florist? Ms. Nichols explained that many times when you order online with a company based out of state, the orders end up back with a local florist, who only gets paid a portion of the fee you have paid, and with not always all the information for the order details. As a result there are a number of times a local florist makes a delivery for an online order which results in an unhappy customer, which ends up reflecting badly on

the local florist, that didn't receive the order originally. Ms. Nichols again stressed that it is important to shop locally to help support the small businesses.

Commissioners thanked Ms. Nichols for coming to speak to the Economic Development Commission and wished the CT Floral Design School continued success.

#### B) Speakers for Future Meetings

Commissioners suggested inviting a local grower, UTC Aerospace, HD Segur Insurance and Maureen Massucci, head of the business department at Cheshire High School to future meetings of the Economic Development Commission. It was agreed that Ms. Massucci would be invited to the next Commission meeting.

#### C) WS Development

Mr. Sitko stated that at this point everyone is aware that WS Development has decided not to build the Outlets at Cheshire, and there are many articles related to this decision in this meeting's packet. Mr. Sitko stated that now is the time to look at the Interchange Zone area again, especially to review the infrastructure needs for that area. It was also noted that the permits that WS Development received for final site plan and mixed use are still in effect until they reach their expiration dates in 2019 and 2018, respectively. Another developer could purchase the permit rights from WS Development but would be limited only to the development that is shown on the approved plans. If a developer wished to alter the approved plans, they would be subject to Planning & Zoning Commission review as well as the necessary State agencies, according to Town Planner Voelker.

#### D) Business Appreciation Day

Mr. Sitko is hopeful that the Elim Park dining hall renovation project will stay on schedule so that the next Business Appreciation Day could be held in their dining hall in May or June of 2016. He would like to create a Committee after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year to begin planning for the event. If anyone has any suggestions for the guest speaker for the event, please send their names to Mr. Sitko, who added that it was good to "aim high".

#### E) Economic Analysis

Mr. Sitko stated that he has met with Commissioner O'Connell and Chairman Pelletier to discuss the outline approach for the Economic Analysis project for Cheshire. The group will be discussing more with the Commission in the coming months.

## F) Liaison Reports

Councilwoman Nichols reported that the Town Council will be reviewing the Plan of Conservation and Development for Cheshire with the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Mr. Gromko, Liaison from the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce stated that the Fall Festival on Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> and Food Truck Festival on Friday Night, September 11<sup>th</sup> went very well.

## G) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko reported that the Planning & Zoning Commission is reviewing plans for a trampoline park at the former House of Doors facility on West Johnson Avenue. Bozzuto's has recently purchased the former Farmington Polo Grounds.

There are a number of articles included in this meeting's packet regarding a manufacturing program at Goodwin College, the Nation's Safest Cities, South Windsor Technology Park, Development Activity in Cheshire and the Regional Brownfield Partnership of West Central Connecticut.

Mr. Sitko asked Commissioners if they would be interested in setting up a bus tour of the north end of Cheshire on a Saturday morning to get a good look at the available business space? Commissioners were very interested and Mr. Sitko stated that he would get something set up.

The expansion of the Linear Trail in Cheshire continues and Mr. Sitko noted that the section from West Main Street to Jarvis Street will be done by November 2015; the section from Jarvis Street to the Southington town line should be done by October 2016 and then the State will work on the section from Cornwall Avenue to West Main Street.

Mr. Sitko shared a letter he received from Housing Authority Insurance on Commerce Court regarding their tax incentive with the Town as it relates to their projected employee numbers. As a result of their employee numbers being slightly below what was projected before the project started, the Town Council has made a slight adjustment to their original tax incentive figures.

Advanced Auto Zone will be leasing 10,000 square feet in part of the former Staples location in Cheshire Shopping Center on South Main Street; 3,000 square feet are still available in that plaza.

Mr. Sitko stated that the Wesson property should be remediated by the end of the year. He also stated that there continues to be a lot of interest in the former Arby's location on South Main Street but there is an expensive, multi-year lease on the property that has deterred many interested in the location.

H) Other

None.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Pelletier adjourned the September 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski  
Recording Secretary