

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, April 19, 2016
7:30 a.m. – Room 207/209 – Town Hall**

Commissioners Present:

Chairman David Pelletier, Derek Gromko, Lou Nero, Dan O’Connell, Steve Sidoruk, William Stanley and Ray Voelker.

Commissioner Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

Arnett Talbot, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager.

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. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Election of Officers will take place at the meeting in May.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING – March 15, 2016

Mr. Nero noted a typo “rale” should be “role” under Liaison Reports.

MOTION by Mr. Sidoruk that the minutes from the March 15, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted as amended. **SECONDED** by Mr. Voelker.

The motion passed unanimously by all present.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

There was nothing to report.

VIII. BUSINESS

A) Discussion with Arnett Talbot Re: Freedom of Information (FOI)

Ms. Talbot discussed the fundamentals of Freedom of Information (FOI) noting that everyone has access to public information and this should be kept in mind when communicating electronically. She advised that information pertaining to Economic Development should be housed in its own folder online.

Ms. Talbot said that Freedom of Information Communication (FOIC) applies the law and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is the law. Timeframes are in place for filing of agendas and turnaround of meeting minutes.

A question was raised about the process of filing a request. Requests are submitted in writing. Response to a request is 72 hours and is handled as quickly as possible. There is a charge for medium. Paper copies are 10 cents per page.

It was commented that specific word patterns are used to search for information online through email and the web. It does not have to be previously identified subject matter. This is technically referred to as scraping.

Ms. Talbot complimented the Commission for doing things right and that it excels because it makes information as available as possible. She mentioned that there is a Request for Information (RFP) in place to upgrade the town’s website. Any suggestions for changes/enhancements can be emailed to Mr. Sitko.

B) Speakers for Future Meetings

Mr. Sitko suggested that a representative from the Chamber of Commerce be invited to update the Commission on its membership activities, etc.

C) Economic Analysis/Plan

This topic was discussed at the end of the agenda.

Mr. Pelletier reported that three proposals are included in the materials prepared by Mr. Sitko. The proposals will be discussed in detail after today's regular meeting. Mr. Milone has budgeted \$11,000 to proceed with a proposal. Mr. Pelletier asked for comments from the Commission members prior to the sub-committee meeting. The members would like more time to review the proposals. Mr. Nero commented that the principals presented in the proposals from CERC and 4WARD Planning were good. It appears that Four Planning targets interest in real estate.

Arnett Muldrow & Associates, the firm from South Carolina that did work for the Town of Canton, received positive feedback from Mr. Skinner, the CAO for the town of Canton. This company focuses on economic mobility.

Another comment was made that while these companies are all capable of doing the work, CERC is the most expensive. A question was raised as to the possibility of there being a conflict of interest with CERC because of its vested interest with other towns in the state. There may be a need in doing business with a company that is more independent.

Going forward the Commission needs to determine how to align with the core vision to retain residents and businesses so that revenue is not lost. A plan should be in place to the Cheshire Town Council. Perhaps there is room for negotiation. Line items can remain or be taken out from all proposals.

D) Business Appreciation Day

Business Appreciation Day will be held on June 23, 2016. Mr. Sitko asked for a meeting to be scheduled with Mr. Sidoruk, Mr. Stanley and Mr. Gromko which will be held on Thursday, April 21 at 3:00 p.m.

E) Cheshire Chamber's Support Local Businesses Initiative

Mr. Gromko said that the "Be Loyal to Local" theme expresses being loyal to the community and keeping business in town. A flier to be sent to 10,000 households will highlight businesses in town that are Chamber and non-Chamber members. Purchasers of ads will receive a lawn sign, social media activity, and an ad in the Cheshire Herald. This is an effort to help owners' jumpstart their businesses. The campaign will take place during National Small Business Week, the first week in May, and Mother's Day on May 9. It is hopeful that local businesses benefit from the campaign during these dates.

To sell ads and coupons for the flier, Mr. Gromko reached out to the marketing class at Cheshire High School to assist with this effort. The students went on a field trip to prospect some non-chamber businesses. They knocked on doors, prepared value statements citing the Chamber and its values, and asked the businesses to participate. As a result of these efforts, businesses are interested and the Chamber is following up with them.

Incentives to join the Chamber, if businesses join now, are free membership through the end of the year and the membership pays for the remainder of next year resulting in six months free.

Mr. Gromko is thinking of other initiatives to continue to carry on the theme such as restaurant week.

F) Ball & Socket Arts, Inc.

Mr. Sitko is working with Mr. Gancarz, Town Engineer, on this project. They attended the last Town Council meeting along with Jeffrey Guimond from Ball & Socket Arts, Inc. The Town Council authorized a \$750,000 Remedial Action and Redevelopment Municipal Grant for asbestos abatement and related activities at this site. This activity will enable commercial occupancy in certain areas of the building and develop a strategy for additional funding.

The grant is due on April 26. Mr. Guimond noted that the remediation numbers are higher than expected and that it has taken 5 – 6 years to get to this point and gather information to present to donors. Mr. Sitko is working with CREC to complete the grant as it may be in charge of this project.

A request for an additional \$200,000 for analysis and remediation, part of the current \$400,000 Brownfields Grant, was also authorized by the town council

A reference was made to a Waterbury Republican article to get legislation passed to set up ground field redevelopment districts in the state. It is becoming a trend and a consultant from New York City has been contacted who has revitalized areas like these.

G) Liaison Reports

It was reported that the town budget passed but that proposals being considered by the state may be cut which will include approximately \$1 million from pilot and other programs. The town will not know the outcome of these proposals until the state adjourns in the summer. If the programs are cut, the town's budget will be revisited with adjustments made to spending.

H) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko said that Nosal Builders in Durham is relocating to Cheshire and will be building a 25,000 square foot building on Fieldstone Court.

Shred-It, located off of Diana Court, needs more space and is looking for more property. It is considering space in the building that will be built for Nosal Builders.

RALO Properties, has been approved for a 22,000 square foot warehouse addition at 15 Burton Drive. Tropicana will relocate to this facility.

Abilities Without Boundaries on 615 West Johnson Avenue is looking for more space and will consider space at the RALO site.

WANHO, that makes cell tower equipment, will be taking 72,000 square feet at 156 Knotter Drive.

Mr. Sitko said that he is trying to retain an manufacturing company that is currently in Cheshire. Its lease runs out on September 1.

Mr. Sitko mentioned that the Macy's Tour is scheduled on April 28 at 9:00 a.m. Anyone who is interested should reach out to him.

I) Other

The Civil War Monument across from Town Hall is being restored to commemorate its 150th Anniversary in July.

IX. Adjournment

Chairman Pelletier adjourned the April 19th meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Guite
Recording Secretary