

**CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE  
REGULAR MEETING  
Tuesday, October 18, 2016  
7:30 a.m. – Room 207/209 – Town Hall**

Commissioners Present:

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

Commissioner Absent:

Steve Sidoruk

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:

Jeffrey Solan, Vin Masciana, and Kelly Lenz of Cheshire Public Schools and Robert deJongh of the Inland Wetlands Commission

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. 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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING – September 20, 2016**

**MOTION** by Mr. Nero that the minutes from the September 20, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted.

**SECONDED** by Mr. Stanley

The motion passed unanimously by all present.

## **VI. COMMUNICATIONS**

- a) Letter of September 22, 2016 from Chairman Pelletier to Joy Hostage.

Mr. Pelletier's letter stated that the EDC extended its deepest condolences at the passing of her husband, Arthur, and the contributions that he made when he served as chairman of the EDC.

- b) Letter of September 16, 2016 from Town Manager, Michael Milone to DOT Commissioner Redeker.

Mr. Milone thanked Commissioner Redeker for meeting with him on September 6 to discuss issues in Cheshire and possible resolutions regarding the retaining wall on Rt. 10 near 289 South Main Street; parking, pedestrian access and the HAWK system at the Farmington Canal Heritage Greenway Trail; and CTfastrak.

## **VII. BUSINESS**

- a) Discussion Re: Facilities Master Plan of Board of Education

Mr. Masciana, Chief Operating Officer of Cheshire Public Schools, and School Superintendent Jeffrey Solan discussed the Facilities Master Plan. While the town council has made no decisions on how to address the future needs of the schools, Mr. Sitko felt that it was important that the commission members hear about the plan which can have significant financial impact for the town.

Mr. Masciana said that the master plan is in the proposal stage after being started by the BOE Planning Commission over 2 years ago. In 2015, each school was inspected and it was determined that buildings have aged and require significant funding. Mr. Masciana presented a chart illustrating the 8 main school buildings, years constructed, and current age.

The concept is to build and close facilities over a 10 year period; realistically taking 15 years to complete. An enrollment analysis compiled by Perkins Eastman Architects states that the town has existing zoning capacity for 1,540 additional housing units primarily in the northeastern area serviced by Doolittle Elementary School. Other information including charts and graphs illustrate scenarios based on suggested propositions for each school.

A representation of improving economic trends including increase in the biotech industry in the I-91 corridor and Cheshire being a desirable town will result in more jobs and demands for housing and increased enrollment in schools.

Mr. Pelletier is concerned that a \$1,500 tax increase will be a deterrent for companies who may be looking to come to Cheshire.

The challenge will be finding an appropriate balance and timing to repurpose, close and build new schools. Going forward, the BOE will work with stakeholders to craft a message and fiscally manage this undertaking.

b) Chapman Property

Mr. Sitko said that Cheshire voters approved the acquisition of the Chapman Property at the September 27<sup>th</sup> referendum. Mr. Sitko included a copy of the letter in the Cheshire Herald on September 22 stating the EDC's endorsement of the town's purchase this property.

c) Economic Analysis

Mr. Muldrow will return to Cheshire on November 14 to meet with the EDC and project steering committee. It is expected that he will be reporting on his preliminary findings and provide a status report and timeline for the project. He will also complete interviews that were scheduled during his September visit.

Mr. Sitko included articles provided by Mr. O'Connell regarding beneficial economic growth in Bristol, VA and Chattanooga, TN resulting from construction of fiber optic networks.

d) Speakers for Future Meetings

A speaker for December will be determined. The November meeting will be held on, Monday, November 14, to accommodate Mr. Muldrow's visit.

e) Liaison Reports

Mr. Gromko, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, said that Restaurant Week is scheduled from November 7–13. Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be served at special prices to commemorate the event. Over 15 restaurants will be participating. Online registration is encouraged and is available on the chamber's website. Restaurant Week will be advertised in the Cheshire Herald, lawn signs and social media.

A change of date for the Fall Festival in 2017 is being considered. The laser show will not be repeated next year. The hope is that the Chapman Property can be used for the fireworks display.

Mr. deJongh said that there are no challenges currently with Inland Wetlands. To date, all is quiet.

Ms. Lenz reported that November 15 is Career Day. Career Day has been scheduled in November this year due, in part, to a new principal and guidance staff. This date also falls within National Education Week.

Mr. Sitko encouraged members to participate in Career Day and that Ms. Lenz does a good job putting together this event.

f) Coordinator's Report

Mr. Sitko said that UTC Aerospace has been retained for another 5 years which will result in keeping 265 jobs in Cheshire. In addition, it has a 3/3 option following completion of the 5 years.

Consolidated Industries held a grand opening open house to unveil new hammers which are used in its custom die forgings business for aerospace, automotive and other industries. More than \$10M was invested to replace 5 old stem hammers with new hydraulic hammers. It will be adding 30 jobs over the next several years.

The Plan of Conservation and Development is going to begin to move forward with suggestions made by the commission including the expansion of lot coverage from 25 to 35%, and possibly reducing the minimum lot size

from 3 acres to 1 acre if there is proper access management in the I-2 Zone. The lot size in the Interchange Zone may be reduced from 10 acres to 3 to 5 acres. The West Main Street area will also be addressed.

Mr. Sitko made the members aware that he had conversations with an individual in Los Angeles who said that a company is doing a preliminary search and looking at a number of sites in Connecticut to build a 700,000 to 800,000 sq. ft. distribution building which will bring 500 new jobs. Mr. Sitko said that the interchange zone may, or may not, be under consideration. Mr. Sitko added that warehouse/distribution is not allowed in the interchange zone so it will require a "text" change. In addition, there are no utilities at this site. He has asked the town attorney to write an outline putting a tax increment financing plan in place in case the town decides to use it. Mr. Sitko asked the members if they might consider supporting a "text" change to Planning and Zoning which will permit warehouse/distribution in the interchange zone.

Mr. O'Connell said that it is worth taking a chance. Typically when a company like Amazon builds a facility it is within 25 miles of another. Mr. O'Connell also said that Walmart recently acquired jet.com which is an internet shopping site. A "text" change will allow pursuing opportunities. The members agreed that they should discuss this idea at an upcoming meeting. It is a good time because Mr. Muldrow is developing his report.

The West Main Street sidewalk project is going well despite the detour. A 4 foot high retaining wall will to be built along parts of 1,600 feet of new sidewalk. This will create connectivity of the shopping centers, the trail and more.

The financial assistance program for Ball & Socket Arts is being finalized. It will be presented to town council soon.

The linear trail section from Jarvis to Southington is complete. Several punch list items are being taken care of.

There was a rumor that Horizon Group, the developer for the East Hartford Outlet Center, pulled out. Mr. Sitko spoke with an executive vice president at Horizon Group who said that the project is going forward. It is asking East Hartford for a tax abatement of \$15.7M.

In Maplecroft Plaza, the Dress Barn will become a Japanese Restaurant. There may be some shifting in retail businesses at the Denali space.

Mr. Pelletier mentioned that in a New York Times article about Sunil Gulati (recent guest speaker and former Cheshire High School graduate, the United States is interested in hosting the World Cup in 2026.

**VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Pelletier adjourned the October 18th meeting of the Economic Development Commission at 8:50 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Guite, Recording Secretary