Commissioners Present:
Vice Chairman Lelah Campo, Brian Miller, David Orsini, Robert Sepp, and William Stanley

Commissioner Absent:
David Pelletier and Richard Kaplan

Staff Present:
Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:
David Schrumm, Town Council Liaison; Debbie Rapoport of Jordan Caterers (departed at 8:15 a.m.)

I. CALL TO ORDER
Vice Chairman Campo 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 – June 15, 2010
July 20, 2010

MOTION by Mr. Sepp that the minutes from the June 15, 2010 Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission be accepted as presented. SECONDED by Mr. Stanley.
VOTE: In Favor – Campo, Miller, Sepp and Stanley  
Opposed – None  
Abstained – Orsini  

The motion passed 4 – 0 –1.

Commissioners determined that the July 20th Economic Development Commission did not have a quorum and were just notes on the meeting. Therefore a vote was not taken on the acceptance of minutes for the July 20, 2010 meeting.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS  

There were communications throughout the packet for Commissioners to review.

VII. BUSINESS  

A) Discussion with Jordan Caterers  

Vice Chairman Campo and Mr. Sitko welcomed Debbie Rapoport, co-owner of Jordan Caterers who was present to talk with the Cheshire Economic Development Commission this morning.

Mrs. Rapoport talked about how she and her husband, Jeffrey, opened up a restaurant in the Watch Factory in 1979, where they stayed for 6 years. It was difficult to have their restaurant in that location because of visibility and limited businesses in the building. From the Watch Factory, they moved to a location on West Main Street for 9 years, where they changed their business to Jordan Caterers. As the business started growing they moved to their current location on Highland Avenue. Approximately 6 years ago, Jordan Caterers underwent an expansion of their facility from 2500 square feet to 11,000 square feet. Mrs. Rapoport noted that Jordan Caterers was able to receive assistance from the Town and Economic Development Commission in the form of incentives, which were great.

Mrs. Rapoport also informed the Commission that Jordan Caterers currently owns the 13.5 acres north of them on Highland Avenue, which is zoned I-2 and has access to sewers; there are some wetlands on the property but 6 acres is buildable. The property is for sale but the Rapoports have been very specific on the type of business they would sell to, as they want a business that would enhance Cheshire.

Over the last 10 years Jordan Caterers has expanded into design event planning and venue management. They have managed the Guilford Yacht Club for about 10 years now and are happy to say that they are totally booked for next Summer already. In June 2010 Jordan Caterers opened The New England Emporium Eatery and Marketplace on Main Street in Middletown. At this location they have a freezer with
prepared food, daily selections of soups, sandwiches and hot meal specials as well as
desserts. In addition they also do some small catering out of this facility. The
Emporium is open 7 days a week from 7 a.m. until 9 p.m.

In addition, Jordan Caterers operates the museum café for lunches 6 days a week at
the New Britain Museum of American Art, where they were voted best lunch in Hartford
County by Connecticut Magazine. They are the exclusive caterers for the New Haven
Country Club and the Whinstone Tavern at Stanley Golf. They offer catering services
at Lyman Homestead in Middletown and at Art Space in New Haven. In addition,
Jordan Caterers offers catering and event planning at homes and venues across
Connecticut. Jordan Caterers is the official caterer and is a sponsor at Long Wharf,
too.

Mrs. Rapoport informed the Commission that her husband, Jeffrey, is a founding
member of Boulder Knoll in Cheshire and is currently the Vice President of the
Connecticut Food Bank. Jordan Caterers will continue to be in Cheshire because this
is were the Rapoports really want to be. It was noted that the Highland Avenue
location is not currently allowed to sell retail but customers can place small catering
orders for pick up or call to see what is available in their freezer for pick up. Mrs.
Rapoport also noted that Hickory Hill Orchard will carry some of Jordan Caterers items
again this Fall.

When asked about the number of employees that Jordan Caterer has, Mrs. Rapoport
replied that at their peak they have over 200 employees, counting their seasonal help.
She also talked about their expansion a few years ago into Fairfield County with a
catering kitchen in Darien on the Post Road across from the Library. Over the past 6
to 8 months their business from that location has started to pick up, but it has been
slow.

Mr. Sitko asked what local businesses Jordan Caterers works with? Mrs. Rapoport
replied that they have worked with Ice Matters and Power Station for years. They also
have a great relationship with Jubilee Events and Cakes by Anna. She added that
Jordan Caterers always tries to give Cheshire businesses the opportunity to work with
them.

Jordan Caterers was awarded the Best Caterer in Connecticut again this year by
Connecticut Magazine for the 11th year in a row.

Mr. Miller asked where the food comes from for Jordan Caterers? Mrs. Rapoport
replied that they get their food from all over Connecticut but with the large volumes it is
sometimes tough to only use local produce and meats. They do try to support local
growers whenever they can.

Mrs. Rapoport talked about the new chef at Jordan Caterers, Kevin Cottle, who was
the 1st runner up on the television series Hells Kitchen and his sous chef Van Hurd.
Chef Cottle also has a weekly series on Fox 61 on Wednesdays.

Mr. Orsini asked if Jordan Caterers is seeing a turnaround in corporate events yet?
Mrs. Rapoport replied that they still do a good business with the large corporations but
the smaller ones have dramatically dropped with the tough economy.
When asked, Mrs. Rapoport stated that Jordan Caterers does cater events out of state but it is much more cumbersome and there are problems at times with liquor law regulations. She also replied, when asked, that they are not looking at any further expansion of their business for the next few years. Mrs. Rapoport did say that Jordan Caterers might be interested in growing their venue management services but they will be picky to make sure it’s the right location for them.

Vice Chairman Campo thanked Mrs. Rapoport for attending this morning’s Economic Development Commission meeting. Mrs. Rapoport thanked the Commission for the opportunity to come and speak with them and thanked Mr. Sitko for all of his help with the incentive Jordan Caterers received with their building expansion and throughout the years.

B) Meetings with Cheshire companies

Mr. Sitko suggested inviting one of the owners of the major shopping centers to a future Economic Development Commission meeting.

C) Pratt & Whitney

Mr. Sitko reported that Pratt & Whitney laid off approximately 30 employees recently. There are approximately 500 employees left at its Cheshire facility. Pratt & Whitney will be starting its union negotiations soon as the current contract with their machinists expires on December 5, 2010. The Pratt & Whitney facility on Knotter Drive is 294,000 square feet and there has already been some interest in the facility.

Mr. Sitko talked about some enabling legislation for a defense / enterprise zone designation for the Cheshire Pratt & Whitney property.

D) Focus Group Meetings

Mr. Sitko stated that the next Focus Group meeting is scheduled for September 28th at 8 a.m. with the local manufacturers. There will be 2 additional focus group meetings in the Fall. After all of the meetings have been completed a wrap up report will be put together for Commissioners to review.

E) West Main Street Commercial Area Streetscape Improvements Project Update

Mr. Sitko reported that GPIC Construction has been doing a good job on the West Main Street Streetscape project. There is a meeting set for Thursday at 8:30 a.m. of the West Main Street Commercial Area Streetscape Improvements Project Committee. To date the phase 1 contract is for $266,000 and purchase orders have been issued for $60,000 and $38,000 to move the utilities in the area. In addition there was an amendment made to the Milone and MacBroom contract to include the next phase of
the West Main Streetscape improvements. Mr. Sitko expects that GPIC has another 2 to 3 weeks of work left on phase 1. CL & P will be installing the ornamental lighting once GPIC is done with their work. Milone and MacBroom will be working on the detailed design plans for phase 2, next, and Mr. Sitko is hopeful that they can start bidding the next phase this Fall for a Spring completion date. Mr. Sitko noted that phase 1 has been extended to Anderson Tire and the sidewalks were extended to Ives Row and Deepwood Drive.

A response on the third STEAP Grant application of $350,000 for this project is expected this Fall.

F) Incentive Policy

Mr. Sitko informed the Commission that the Incentive Policy Committee met earlier this month. They are continuing to review the current Incentive Policy and have started to look at other towns’ Incentive Policies. Some items being discussed are waivers or partial waivers of building permit fees and sewer fees. The Committee is also looking at other personal property abatement options, which Mr. Sitko is working with the Town Assessor on.

G) Business Appreciation Day

The Business Appreciation Day Committee met with Mr. Sitko and Sheldon Dill of the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce recently. The next Business Appreciation Day will be held in May 2011. The Committee has suggested 3 potential speakers and once a speaker has been locked in, a date will be selected. The event will be held at Elim Park, who has also volunteered again to print the brochure for Business Appreciation Day.

H) Liaison Reports

Councilman Schrumm, Town Council Liaison noted that the Town Council approved the Capital Budget at the end of August. Most of the funding went to maintain what the Town has; $1 million has been allocated for new roofing at Cheshire High School; $1.5 million has been allocated for road repairs; funding has been allocated for the design work for 2 pump station upgrades; $30 million has been allocated for the Water Pollution Control Plant upgrade. Councilman Schrumm also stated that the Town Council will have health care consultants in to speak to them at their September 28th meeting to talk about upcoming changes.

Councilman Schrumm talked about the possible expansion of the Linear Trail to West Main Street and the positive economic development impact it could have on West Main Street if walkers are brought to the area.
I) Coordinator’s Report

Mr. Sitko has included in this meeting’s packet copies of recent articles relating to DanJon Manufacturing and Ye Old Body Shop, for the Commissioners to review.

Mr. Sitko stated that Arch Chemicals will be vacating their 40,000 square foot facility on Knotter Drive, resulting in a loss of 40 jobs to Cheshire. Alexion Pharmaceuticals may take over the Arch Chemical space in their shared building.

Mr. Sitko mentioned that Paul and Phil Bowman will be doing some emergency repairs to Earl Conti’s property on South Main Street, to help stabilize the 2 historic buildings before winter. He added that he is not sure what the buildings may be used for but any improvements to the buildings will be a positive development.

Mr. Sitko has been working with Yankee Gas representatives and has secured a commitment of $19,000 towards the work that needs to be done on the parklet in the center of Town, which will include replacing the brick sidewalks in that area; the entire project is estimated to cost $55,000.

American Country Barn is moving out of Goshen, CT to Blacks Road. There will be a showroom and some fabrication done at this new Cheshire location.

Mr. Sitko stated that the former Hartman / Hulteen property on South Main Street has new owners that are before Planning & Zoning to re-develop the property. Two medical condominium buildings with apartments on top will be constructed towards the back of the property; the existing building will remain.

Cheshire Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Cheshire program will be getting underway soon, with assistance from Quinnipiac University. Mr. Sitko noted that last weekend’s Fall Festival was a great success for the Chamber.

Mr. Sitko reported that the Cheshire Post Office will be staying at its Maple Avenue location thru 2014, which is when the new lease with the property owner will expire. Mr. Stanley suggested that the Post Office move some of its south end residents’ post office boxes to its satellite location at Timberline Office Supplies to help with some of the traffic concerns at the Maple Avenue facility. Councilman Schrumm suggested that a new exit be constructed behind the Post Office to have traffic leave the Maple Avenue facility through the Stop & Shop access way, next to the Post Office.

Mr. Sitko talked about the Central Connecticut Alliance for Economic Development group that are looking to invite the new State Economic Development Commissioner to a meeting. They are also planning to meet in May 2011 with real estate agents and developers.

I) Other

None.
VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Stanley to adjourned the meeting at 8:55 a.m.; SECONDED by Mr. Sepp.

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

The motion passed 5 - 0.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary