Commissioners Present:
Chairman David Pelletier, Lelah Campo (arrived at 7:47 a.m.), Brian Miller (departed at 8:32 a.m.), Robert Sepp and William Stanley

Commissioner Absent:
Richard Kaplan and Thomas Scannell

Staff Present:
Jerry Silko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:
Arthur Hosage, former Economic Development Commissioner, Bob DeJongh, Inland / Wetlands Commission Liaison; Bob Williams, President of Harkness Industries (departed at 8:30 a.m.)

I. CALL TO ORDER
Chairman Pelletier called the meeting to order at 7:32 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 – April 20, 2010 Regular Meeting
As a result of the minutes not being included in this meeting’s packet, the Commissioners agreed that this item would be tabled until the next meeting.
VI. COMMUNICATIONS

A) EOC Membership List

The updated listing of EDC members was included in this meeting’s packet.

VII. BUSINESS

A) Discussion with Harkness Industries

Chairman Pelletier and Mr. Sitko welcomed Bob Williams, President of Harkness Industries who was present to talk with the Cheshire Economic Development Commission this morning. Mr. Williams explained that Harkness Industries is a plastic manufacturing company located on Grandview Court that was started in the 1960’s in Cheshire. He and his wife became the 3rd owners of Harkness in 2001 with his wife being the majority stockholder. Both Mr. and Mrs. Williams are engineers; Mr. Williams background is in the chemical industry and Mrs. Williams is in electronics and aerospace.

From 2001 until 2009, Harkness Industries had a steady sales growth of 4 – 5% each year. 2009 was a tough year for everyone and it looks like 2010 will be better than last year at Harkness Industries.

Harkness Industries started with injection molding plastics in the 1960’s; around 1983 they started creating cast polyurethane. Mr. Williams brought in samples of some of the current products that Harkness Industries manufactures at their facility: postal sorting pinch wheels, door stops for AVACS planes’ radar panels, bowling lane equipment such as pin setters and bat bumper and squeegee blades for silk screening.

Mr. Hostage asked if Harkness Industries creates their own original designs or if they use their customers’ designs. Mr. Williams replied that they work to their customers’ drawings 98% of the time but added that custom parts will be where they will see the most growth for the company and now accounts for about 1/3 of the company’s revenue.

Mr. Williams explained that if all goes well, Harkness Industries will be the only approved U.S. source for the postal sorting pinch wheels and some other items for their sorting equipment. Mr. Hostage asked if Harkness Industries exports their products and Mr. Williams replied, yes, but only a little bit, generally to companies with locations in both the U.S. and other countries. The exporting is only about 2% of Harkness’ business. Mr. Williams noted that there are about 500 – 1,000 companies in the United States like Harkness that manufacture plastics.

Mr. DeJongh asked how many employees there are at Harkness Industries? Mr. Williams replied that there are 25 employees now but with the expected growth that will come when the U.S. Postal Service contracts with them, they will likely add another 4 or 5 employees as well as make some capital expenditures. Mr. Sitko asked about the
skills needed for these positions and Mr. Williams stated that they would be looking for people who have a good work ethic, are trainable and have basic math skills.

Mr. Williams talked about the process of injection molding of plastics. He stated that Harkness Industries makes about 400 different parts using injection molding and they have 10 injection molding machines. Gem Sensors of Plainville, CT and Ashcroft of New Haven, CT are two of their larger customers.

Mr. Hostage asked how important it is to have a technology edge over the competition? Mr. Williams stated that it is critical in the cast polyurethane business.

Mr. Williams explained that since he and his wife have taken ownership of Harkness, they have gone through the process of creating detail work instructions for each part that they make, which has been very important.

When asked what concerns Harkness Industries has, as a business located in Cheshire, CT Mr. Williams commented that the State does not make it easy to stay here as a manufacturer. The high energy costs, high minimum wages combined with high health care costs really make it a challenge. Mr. Hostage suggested that Mr. Williams talk to Peter DeGoia about his difficulties as a manufacturer in Connecticut.

Chairman Pelletier thanked Mr. Williams for attending this morning’s Economic Development Commission meeting.

B) Meetings with Cheshire companies

Mr. Sitko suggested inviting Jordan Caterers to the June 2010 Economic Development Commission meeting. Other suggestions for future meetings are Ye Old Body Shop and Physic Plus.

C) Pratt & Whitney

Mr. Sitko reported that Pratt & Whitney will be back in court on June 9th. He also stated that he has talked with U.S.I. regarding the disposition of the Pratt & Whitney property in Cheshire. They are located on Knotter Drive in a 294,000 square foot building, which is considered modern and very clean so it will show well to prospective new tenants.

Mr. Sitko talked about a Legislative Act that was passed concerning Connecticut’s Competitiveness in the aerospace and defense industries. He will be doing an analysis of the Legislation for the incentive committee.

D) Focus Group Meetings

Mr. Sitko stated that he would like to arrange for a Focus Group meeting for the manufacturers for June 17th or 24th. He reminded Commissioners that not more than 3
members should attend this Focus Group meeting; otherwise it will have to be posted as an Economic Development Commission meeting. Mr. Sepp stated that he would like to attend and Mr. Stanley stated that he would likely be available.

E) West Main Street Commercial Area Streetscape Improvements Project Update

Mr. Sitko reported that the West Main Street Commercial Area Streetscape Subcommittee has put phase 1 out to bid and they have come back under what was projected for this phase. GPIC Construction was the winning, lowest bid and Mr. Sitko noted that Milone and MacBroom has worked with them in the past, commenting that they are a good company. The contract between GPIC and the Town of Cheshire is being finalized and then a pre-construction meeting will be held. Mr. Sitko is finalizing the variances from the property owners that are needed for this phase of the project. The State is still planning for a Summer 2011 time frame for the culvert work, probably over a long weekend.

Mr. DeJongh talked about how great it would be if the former Ball & Socket building could be renovated so the gorgeous façade could be preserved. Mr. Sitko has reminded the property owner, Mr. Dalton, that it is a historic building, although it is not located in a historic district.

F) EDC Representative to Town Beautification Committee

An Economic Development Commission representative to the Town Beautification Committee is still needed, anyone interested should notify Chairman Pelletier or Mr. Sitko. The Town Beautification Committee meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 a.m.

G) W/S Development Project - Update

Mr. Sitko stated that there is a proposed text change for the Interchange Zone before the Planning and Zoning Commission that would give a 10 year extension for the submission of final plans. He noted that W/S Development is coming near the end of their approval time frame and if this text change is approved, it would give W/S Development more time.

H) Liaison Reports

Mr. DeJongh commented that the Inland / Wetland Commission remains quiet.

I) Coordinator’s Report

Mr. Sitko reported that there will be an article in this week’s Cheshire Herald about the upcoming sale of Slater’s Funeral Home at 242 South Main Street. The building is in a
C-1 Zone and is in a good location in the center of Town. He also stated that Logod Sports is looking into expansion options for their location on Cornwall Avenue.

Toyz will be opening a second location in Wallingford soon that will combine a toy store and ice cream shop.

Mr. Silko stated that he is again working with Meriden Transit to start an inter-city bus route between Meriden, Cheshire and Southington. He reminded Commissioners that this project had been started a few years ago but fell through with budget cuts. Mr. Hostage suggested that Wallingford be included as well.

Mr. Silko is working to finalize a date for a Fall 2010 Business Appreciation Day. After a date is selected, a guest speaker can be finalized. He would like to have a Business Appreciation Day Committee meeting within the next 2 months to review these topics.

The Incentive Committee should start meeting in September in preparation for the June 2011 expiration of the existing incentive policy.

Ms. Campo talked about the traffic study of Route 10 that was done just over a year ago that talked about the traffic lights not being timed properly. She asked if this was ever addressed by the State and Mr. Silko stated that he would look into it.

Mr. Silko suggested inviting members of the West Main Streetscape Committee to a future EDC Meeting to review the plans they have moved ahead with for this project.

J) Other

None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Pelletier to adjourned the meeting at 8:58 a.m.; SECONDED by Mr. Stanley.

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

The motion passed 4 - 0.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary