

NEWINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
NEWINGTON TOWN HALL
131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT
CONFERENCE ROOM L-101 LOWER LEVEL, TOWN HALL
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2016
7:05 pm.

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Commissioner Richard Capuano
Commissioner Dan L. Fisher
Commissioner Dana Havens
Commissioner Maria Pane
Commissioner Pamela Raynock
Commissioner Ken St. Onge

MEMBERS ABSENT

Commissioner Clifford Stamm

PRESENT: Town Council Liaison Gail Budrejko
Economic Development Director Andrew Brecher

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Commissioner Havens nominated Commissioner Capuano to be Chairman, seconded by Commissioner Fisher. There were no other nominations. Commissioner Capuano was elected unanimously.

Commissioner Fisher nominated Commissioner Pane to be Vice-Chairman, seconded by Commissioner Havens. There were no other nominations. Commissioner Pane was elected unanimously.

Chairman Capuano nominated Commissioner St. Onge to be Secretary, seconded by Commissioner Pane. There were no other nominations. Commissioner St. Onge was elected unanimously.

III. SET MEETING DATES FOR 2016

The Commissioners agreed to the following meeting dates:

FEBRUARY 17, 2016 [Special Meeting]
MARCH 02, 2016
APRIL 06, 2016
MAY 04, 2016
JUNE 01, 2016
AUGUST 03, 2016
SEPTEMBER 07, 2016
OCTOBER 05, 2016
NOVEMBER 02, 2016
DECEMBER 07, 2016
JANUARY 04, 2017

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES-November 4, 2015

Commissioner St. Onge made a motion to accept the November 4, 2015 minutes. Chairman Capuano seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Chairman Capuano outlined his vision for the Commission, including economic growth to offset the rising tax burden, strengthening partnerships with businesses and organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and promoting Newington as a "destination" town.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

VIII. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Brecher reported on activity since the November 2015 meeting. Items included Mayor Zartarian delivering certificates from the holiday event to select businesses and Data Mail (the EDC's Business of the Year) donating an additional \$6,000 to fund concerts in 2016, the Town Plan and Zoning Commission's expected "tweaking" of the PD zone to allow Transit Oriented Development, the anticipated closing of Clinical Lab Partners (a Hartford Healthcare company) in 2016 and the likely significant increase in property values for commercial and industrial properties throughout town in the 2015 revaluation.

Other items covered were PCB sampling at the National Welding site, Ashley Furniture's soft opening, STOC Restaurant coming to Best Market Plaza, Focus Physical Therapy opening on Fenn Road, Signs Now relocating and doubling their space within O'Neil Plaza, Wood-n-Tap Restaurant construction beginning in the Raymour & Flanigan building, steel erected for the new medical office building at 2272 Berlin Turnpike, substantial completion of wetland area improvements at the development site on the corner of East Cedar Street and Russell Road and the future redevelopment of 3333 Berlin Turnpike.

Mr. Brecher also responded to Commissioner inquiries regarding recruitment of new businesses, the Hartford Regional Center, the Cedarcrest Hospital property and vacant space next to Walmart.

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Town Council liaison Gail Budrejko shared her disappointment at the number of business attendees at the 2015 EDC holiday event and suggested the EDC conduct a "debriefing" to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the event. She also suggested considering changing the time of year of the event. Councilor Budrejko encouraged the EDC to set goals, one of which should be to focus on existing businesses, help them celebrate their milestones, recognizing that even businesses "want to feel loved."

Gail Whitney, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, noted the State of the Town breakfast will be held on Thursday, February 25, 2016. She suggested consideration of a joint event co-hosted by the Chamber and the EDC. Ms. Whitney advised that Kenpo Karate is celebrating 25 years in business, that Farmer's Insurance is rumored to be seeking a location in Newington, that having multiple physical therapy centers in town makes sense since our population is 28 percent seniors and that she would personally like to see a Container Store and a 400 person conference center opened in Newington.

Rose Lyons remarked she senses a "rejuvenation" of the EDC and welcomed the new members. She also stated that she is confused as to who has responsibility for snow removal in the Town Center.

Hal Whitney challenged the EDC to reconsider its purpose and to pursue specific action steps. He also complimented Director Brecher on doing "a great job" and keeping the EDC members informed. Mr. Whitney also wondered if a database of available properties shared with the Chamber of Commerce might be valuable.

X. REMARKS BY COMMISSIONERS

Several Commissioners commented on the holiday event and how to shape it for the future. Suggestions included a clearer understanding of the purpose and message, alternate forms of publicity, challenges to obtaining accurate business and longevity lists, establishing a planning committee and flexibility in budgeting. It was agreed this item should be the focus of a future EDC meeting.

Commissioners also participated in a general discussion of goal-setting for the Commission and how goals should be set in light of state statutes and the town charter. Chairman Capuano volunteered to email background information to Commission members before the February, 2016 meeting to allow time for individuals to prepare their thoughts on a vision for the EDC and a corresponding mission statement.

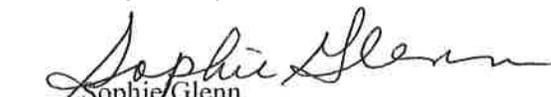
There was also a conversation about the role of the EDC in addressing maintenance issues in the Town Center. It was agreed there should be a future agenda item to discuss this topic further, with invitations extended to Town Center business leaders who could provide specifics of maintenance deficiencies.

Commissioner St. Onge thanked Mayor Roy Zartarian for attending the latter half of the meeting. It was the first time in recent memory that a mayor had attended an EDC meeting.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner St. Onge made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Pane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:


Sophie Glenn,
Recording Secretary