

NEWINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
NEWINGTON TOWN HALL
131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT
CONFERENCE ROOM L-101 LOWER LEVEL, TOWN HALL
WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2016

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Commissioner Richard Capuano
Commissioner Maria Pane
Commissioner Ken St. Onge
Commissioner Dan Fisher
Commissioner Dana Havens
Commissioner Sarah Jorgensen
Commissioner Michael Fox

Town Council Liaison Gail Budrejko

Economic Development Director Andrew Brecher

ABSENT:

Commissioner Clifford Stamm (excused)
Commissioner Jennifer Spano (excused)
Commissioner Linda Woods (excused)

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Fox made a motion to accept the April 6, 2016 minutes. Commissioner Jorgensen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

VI. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Chairman Capuano thanked Hal Whitney for posting his positive thoughts about the EDC on the Facebook group "Newington Free Speech Speak Your Mind".

Chairman Capuano noted he attended the Chamber of Commerce Business Showcase and endorsed the idea of the EDC participating in that event next year.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of Goals and Strategies

Chairman Capuano distributed a list of EDC Goals and Strategies compiled from the discussion at the April 6, 2016 meeting. Commissioners questioned and offered clarifications for several goals/strategies. There was general consensus that the Commission should view the list as a summary of the Commissions' current priorities, but also as a "living document" likely to be modified in the future.

Commissioner Fox made a motion to adopt the list of EDC Goals and Strategies as presented, less item 2C [Quality of their brand]. Commissioner Jorgensen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Districts

Chairman Capuano distributed a map of Newington showing nine areas of town with significant commercial development. Commissioners agreed that each member would be responsible for monitoring business activity within one or more of those "districts." Further, the commissioners agreed to help collect contact information within their districts, beginning simply with inventorying names and addresses of all businesses with a physical presence. Later activities could include entering each business to collect additional contact information, solicit feedback and/or conduct surveys.

District assignments were made as follows:

District 1	Commissioner Fisher (lead), Commissioner St. Onge
District 2	Commissioner Havens (lead), Commissioner Spano
District 3	Commissioner Havens (lead), Commissioner Spano
District 4	Commissioner Jorgensen (lead), Commissioner Fisher
District 5	Chairman Capuano (lead), Commissioner Pane
District 6A	Commissioner Fox (co-lead), Commissioner Pane (co-lead)
District 6B	Commissioner Fox (co-lead), Commissioner Pane (co-lead)
District 7	Commissioner St. Onge (lead), Commissioner Jorgensen
District 8	Commissioner Stamm (lead), Chairman Capuano

B. Working Groups

Chairman Capuano distributed a list of "Working Groups" intended to pursue the adopted Goals and Strategies. Commissioners discussed how such groups would best function and which should be undertaken first. Commissioners agreed there should be six working groups, with three having initial priority. As an example of what could be produced by a working group, Commissioners St. Onge, Havens, and Jorgensen previewed a conceptual Facebook page they developed.

Those volunteering for each Working Group are as follows:

Social Media	Commissioner St. Onge (lead), Commissioner Havens, Commissioner Jorgensen
Website Design	(Pend)
Literature & Brochures	Commissioner Fisher (lead), Commissioner St. Onge, Chairman Capuano
Business Events & Awards	Commissioner Pane (lead), Chairman Capuano, Commissioner Fox
Student Program	(Pend)
Economic Data & Reporting	(Pend)

IX. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Brecher updated the status of the National Welding project, noting that Newington's Conservation Commission approved an amendment to the town's official wetlands map, clarifying that there are no wetlands on the National Welding site or the Hayes property immediately to the west. He also noted there has been no progress in obtaining responses from EPA or DEEP to the PCB report or from DOT regarding parking.

Director Brecher advised that The Office Café in Best Market Plaza has closed but that the build-out of the new D'Amato Chiropractic office is progressing, which will include the space formerly occupied by The Office Café.

Also around town, construction of the Wood-n-Tap is advancing, but at a slower pace, with opening now projected for Fall 2016. Clinical Lab Partners (acquired by Quest Diagnostics) is expected to vacate its building in the Town Center during 2016, but Hartford Healthcare plans on refilling the building by relocating staff from other locations. Newington Arena (skating rinks) on Alumni Road will be applying to expand their facility by adding a third, smaller rink. A national auto parts chain is looking at opening a store in Twin City Plaza. The Sloppy Waffle on the Berlin Turnpike was named "Best Breakfast Place" in New England by Yankee Magazine.

A number of Newington businesses were recently recognized in Hartford Magazine's "Best of" edition. Commissioners agreed letters of congratulations should be sent by the Town to those businesses.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Gail Whitney, Executive Director of the Newington Chamber of Commerce, reported on the Chamber's Business Showcase and the ribbon cutting for Ferrari's Appliance.

She noted the Grand Opening for Farmers Insurance at Best Market Plaza would be on May 17, 2016 and that the Chamber's Annual Meeting and Awards event would be held Friday evening, June 3, 2016 at Indian Hill Country Club. In addition, Ms. Whitney advised that Campbell Cooling had relocated to Stamm Road.

Ms. Whitney was also very supportive of the Facebook page preview.

Hal Whitney thanked the Chairman for recognizing his statements on Facebook encouraging more people to attend the EDC meetings. He also noted his surprise that some Facebook followers reacted negatively to the concept of attracting more businesses to Newington.

Mr. Whitney suggested it might be time, with “brick and mortar” businesses going away, that we “blue sky” the future, including consideration of the electronic infrastructure that will be required to support information-based industries.

Patty Foley asked that the Director’s report be moved up on the agenda so the public did not have to wait so long to hear it. She agreed a business database was a good idea and suggested using library resources, specifically Reference USA, to jump start the process. She requested that copies of meeting handouts to the commissioners also be made available to the public. Ms. Foley also liked the Facebook page preview and suggested it be converted into a 3-fold brochure.

XI. COMMISSIONERS’ REPORTS

Commissioner Fisher invited commissioners to attend the Chamber’s Comedy Night on May 14, 2016 at Indian Hill Country Club.

XII. LIAISONS’ REMARKS

None.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Fox made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Jorgensen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:



Sophie Glenn,
Recording Secretary