

NEWINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
NEWINGTON TOWN HALL
131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT
CONFERENCE ROOM L-101 LOWER LEVEL, TOWN HALL
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 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 Clifford Stamm
Commissioner Michael Fox

Town Council Liaison Gail Budrejko
Town Council Liaison Carol Anest (until 7:25pm)

Economic Development Director Andrew Brecher

ABSENT:

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

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Fox made a motion to accept the March 2, 2016 minutes. Commissioner Havens seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0 with two abstentions.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Gail Whitney, Executive Director of the Newington Chamber of Commerce, reminded commissioners that the Chamber's annual Home & Business Showcase/Taste of Newington would be held on April 30, 2016 at Newington High School and noted there are still booths available. A networking social will be held the evening of April 29, 2016, also at the high school. All commissioners are invited to attend both events.

VI. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Chairman Capuano expressed his interest in wrapping up the discussions regarding goals and ambitions soon. Then the EDC can focus on putting its thoughts into action to do its best to help the community.

Chairman Capuano also remarked he would like to see more communication and coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association. He suggested considering partnering with those organizations to co-host events.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of December, 2015 Holiday Event

Building on the discussion at the last meeting, Commissioner St. Onge offered thoughts about looking forward. He suggested that EDC sponsored events should further the work of the Commission; that it is premature to plan future events when we haven't yet defined our purpose. Moreover, without that sense of clarity, we don't know why we are hosting such events and what audience(s) we should be targeting.

Commissioners then offered numerous ideas regarding the purpose(s) of such events, when during the year the next event should happen, the frequency of such events, possible venues, what time of day they should be held, what type of speakers to offer, whether and what type of awards should be presented, who should be invited, and how to solicit attendees.

By consensus, commissioners agreed to continue discussion at the next meeting.

B. Continue Discussion of Mission, Objectives, Goals, Initiatives

After additional review of the draft Mission Statement, Commissioner Fox made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Pane, to adopt the following:

The mission of the Newington Economic Development Commission is to encourage business and community initiatives that foster economic growth, increase employment opportunities, improve prosperity and expand the Town's tax base in order to preserve Newington's unique character and create a better quality of life for all Newington citizens.

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Goals and Initiatives covered such topics as communications, social media, databases, surveys and reports, honors and awards, reestablishing districts, website development, business resources and partner relationships.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion of Downtown Business Association

This item was postponed to a future meeting for discussion.

B. Discussion of Reinstating Districts

Chairman Capuano stated that he and Director Brecher will develop more information on this topic to help guide discussion at a future meeting.

IX. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Brecher reported that the Town Council at their April 5, 2016 meeting set a new mill rate of 35.75, slightly below the current mill rate of 35.80. However, most commercial and industrial taxpayers will still see an increase in property taxes due to the recent revaluation.

Progress continues at the National Welding site, with PCB's being removed, a draft report prepared for EPA, and an application submitted to Newington's Conservation Commission to correct/amend the existing wetlands mapping to reflect actual conditions. In addition, the Town Plan and Zoning Commission is holding hearings on their proposed Transit Oriented Development Overlay Zone for the Cedar Street Station area. Director Brecher also expressed his frustration with the time it is taking the state Department of Transportation to provide its estimate of the number of parking spaces it would be interested in leasing at the National Welding site.

Director Brecher also updated the Commission on various developments, including the Hunter Development/Amara site, Enterprise Rental Car moving to the other side of the Berlin Turnpike, inquiries from several developers interested in medical office building sites, status of the Constance Leigh Drive Streetscape Improvement Project, build-out continuing at the new Wood-n-Tap and the possibilities for new restaurants at Best Market Plaza and the former Hidden Vine. Director Brecher also noted that the owner of Bob's Stores is expected to file shortly for bankruptcy with store closings anticipated.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Gail Whitney expressed her pleasure at the Commission adopting a Mission Statement. She noted that the Dental Center at 2304 Berlin Turnpike has second floor space for rent. Also, Farmers Insurance has opened in Best Market Plaza.

Hal Whitney stated he was pleased that, in his view, the EDC was "coming back to life". He suggested that once the Commission's plans are more organized, a story should be written for the media.

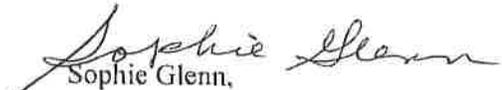
XI. COMMISSIONER AND LIAISON COMMENTS

Commissioner Stamm reiterated the Downtown Business Association continues to struggle—once again finding it difficult to collect a \$25 membership fee from potential members.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Fox made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Pane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:


Sophie Glenn,
Recording Secretary