I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Chairman Theresa Avey
Commissioner Maria Pane
Commissioner Dana Havens
Commissioner David Marsden
Commissioner Fernando Rosa
Commissioner Sharon Dunning
Commissioner Robert Rioux

Town Council Liaison Gail Budrejko

Economic Development Director Andrew Brecher

ABSENT:

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Rioux made a motion to accept the March 6, 2019 minutes. Commissioner Dunning seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rose Lyons thanked the Commission for having copies of the agenda for the public.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Director Brecher commented on the Town Manager’s speech at the March 7, 2019 State of the Town event, noting it was very pro-development.

Director Brecher advised the status of bills with the potential to directly affect development in Newington in the current session of the Connecticut General Assembly: HB5259, HB5260, HB6470, SB18/HB7098.
Director Brecher summarized recent development activities:

-- A zoning code consultant is working on the second draft of Transit Village Design District regulations which will be considered by the Town Council in advance of a potential application to the Town Plan and Zoning Commission.

-- Local Market Plaza: Tyler English Fitness moved out. A new leasing agent has been hired—Douglas Elliman out of New York. The property has also been put up for sale.

-- 475 Willard Avenue: The former Fafnir building is now fully leased with the addition of EB Carports and Metal Structures that is relocating from Elmwood. Other tenants include Corsicana Mattress, Davidson Specialty Foods, Huttig Building Products and Jump-On-In.

-- 395 Willard Avenue: TPZ site plan approval was granted for a 10,000 square foot child care center.

-- 75 Kitts Lane: The former Connecticut School of Massage Therapy business was sold several years ago and eventually renamed Cortiva Massage Therapy School. Cortiva will be moving out soon to a new location in Cromwell, making the entire 32,000 square foot building available for lease or sale.

-- 151 Carr Avenue: WhipLashes Salon will hold its grand opening on April 14, 2019.

-- 2221 Berlin Turnpike: Tony Boloney’s Deli received from TPZ a Special Permit to operate a restaurant.

-- 2227 Berlin Turnpike: The former Sunset Cleaners space is being renovated for a new tenant.


-- 3310 Berlin Turnpike: Industrial Protection Products held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 26, 2019.

-- 3311 Berlin Turnpike: Express Kitchens, who recently purchased the property, has determined it will not need the entire building for its business and is looking to lease the surplus space to another tenant.

Director Brecher also reported that Newington’s unemployment rate has nudged up from 3.2% in December, 2018 to 3.9% in February, 2019, still below the rate of 4.4% for the State of Connecticut.

VII. OLD BUSINESS.

Copies of a map showing commercial areas in town were distributed to commissioners and potential assignments of “Districts” reviewed. All commissioners concurred with their proposed assignments. The initial task will be to become familiar with the businesses within each district.

The next task will be visiting businesses. Director Brecher distributed a template for a tri-part marketing brochure and commissioners provided input. Commissioners agreed that prior to beginning visits there should be discussion of a common script and preparation for how to respond to questions.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioners Avey, Havens, Dunning and Marsden attended the March 30, 2019 CERC Municipal Economic Development Workshop along with representatives from the Town Council, TPZ, Conservation Commission and the Chamber of Commerce. Director Brecher distributed a summary of the themes that emerged that day. Commissioners agreed that additional discussion of those themes should be scheduled as agenda items for future EDC meetings.
IX. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT

Pete Forcellina, Executive Director of the Chamber, distributed a report of recent activities, including the State of the Town, Talk to the Mayor, new members, Business After Hours upcoming events, collaboration with the Environmental Quality Commission and a presentation on Legal Strategies to Protect Your Bottom Line on April 16, 2019. He also noted that “Best of” voting is underway, with winners to be announced at the Chamber’s Annual Meeting on May 31, 2019. In addition, raffle tickets are now available to win a cruise worth $2,500. Only 400 tickets will be sold and the winner will be selected at the Annual Meeting.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rose Lyons commented on the Districts, the Town Website complaint form, Town Center signage and ornamental grasses, Director Brecher’s report, and Constance Leigh Drive.

XI. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Marsden asked Director Brecher to check on a blighted property in the north end of town.

Chairman Avey and Commissioner Pane announced that two Newington businesses, Del Soul Spa and K&A Transportation, were finalists for Hartford Magazine’s “Best of 2019” awards with winners to be announced on April 26, 2019.

Commissioners Dunning, Pane and Havens raised the question of establishing an e-newsletter or EDC social media presence on Facebook and/or Instagram similar to Farmington, suggesting that perhaps a subcommittee should be formed to pursue the idea further.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Rosa made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Rioux seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Sophie Glenn,
Recording Secretary