

NEWINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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Regular Meeting

April 7, 2021

  
Town Clerk

I. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

II. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present

Chairman Theresa Avey  
Commissioner David Marsden (7:15)  
Commissioner Jerilyn Nagel (7:20)  
Commissioner Maria Pane  
Commissioner Robert Rioux  
Commissioner Jay Slater  
Commissioner Clifford Stamm

Commissioners Absent

Commissioner Jennifer Ancona-Excused  
Commissioner Dana Havens-Excused  
Commissioner Fernando Rosa-Excused

III. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the March 3, 2021 were approved unanimously with five voting YEA

IV. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (Speakers limited to two minutes.)

None

V. **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT**

Chairman Avey reported that the Chamber had hired a new Executive Director. She comes from the Wethersfield Chamber. She was previously director there and after she left there Newington was able to hire her. Her name is Leslie Civitello.

The Chamber is doing a drive-in on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Sponsorships are available as well as tickets to the event. Chick-Fil-A is the food sponsor for the event. Contact the Chamber if you are interested.

**VI. OLD BUSINESS**

Keith Chapman had invited to the meeting Bill DeMaio, the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation in regards to the beautification project. Keith gave some of the background of Bill who is responsible for the beautification, the decorating for the holidays of the downtown, of the lighting. The flowers in the flower pots are all done by his staff throughout the whole town and Keith felt that it would be advantageous to have Bill as part of the beautification committee, working with the Economic Development Commission. The Beautification project is an important project for the town moving forward. There is a \$25,000 line item in the budget for the committee, starting July 1, 2021 and he feels that the Commission should zero in on what they would like to see as far as beautification goes throughout the town. Bill brings a lot of experience to the program having been involved previously in other projects. If the project is successful and increases economic development and the real estate values in town, then hopefully in future years the funding will be increased to ensure that the program is continued.

Bill DeMaio indicated he had extensive experience in the city of New Britain in the hanging baskets and the WOW program, paving bricks, decorations, and there are so many good things that towns and cities are doing and by experiencing what other towns and cities are doing with flags and banners. The Welcome to Newington flags, in Newington High School colors have been already installed.

A push is being made for Christmas decorations with the installation of telephone poles at the corner of Willard Avenue and Garfield Street which will enable the installation of a giant LED sign that says, Happy Holidays. The decorations on the poles and on the new government center will tie into the center of town.

Five thousand daffodil bulbs were planted last fall with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee. A green house has been built at the parks garage and flowers and bulbs have been planted into pots about 30 inches wide, about 25 inches tall, and they have seventeen gallons reservoir with a wick, but you don't have to water every day because it wicks the water from the base to the flowers.

There will be an effort to build an American Flag on the corner of Cedar Street and Massoccoli Way. A berm will be built facing Cedar Street and there will be installation of an American Flag made out of red, white and blue flowers. This should alert people that Newington is something special.

Businesses could get involved by buying their own pots, if they want to buy Christmas wreaths in front of their stores, if they want fall flags, there are millions of ideas that can be done.

A new fence was added to the cemetery, the Center Cemetery adding a long overdue touch to the center of town.

Trying to make Newington more beautiful is the key to these projects.

Keith suggested that since the Veterans Memorial would be located on the other side of the berm, perhaps the installation of the flag could be on both sides of the berm.

Other items that Keith mentioned: the Wren's Kitchen is going to be opening before May 1<sup>st</sup>; Burlington Coat Factory is going to be opening before May 1<sup>st</sup>. The hotel on Cedar Street has been approved and they are starting ground work there. The owners of Keeney Manufacturing have an offer that they are working with for a buyer, and the type of business that would be going in there would be extremely similar to what they were. There would not be any change in the appearance of the building or the use of the building. The end result of all of the economic development going on in town now will be very favorable to Newington.

Keith reported that he was contacted by a company for Best Market, but they have lately dropped off their interest.

Commissioner Rioux expressed appreciation for the work having been done by Bill DeMaio, the changes on the town green, and the Christmas decorations over the past couple of years.

Gail Budrejko was concerned about the on-going appearance of the town, a problem is the increase in the amount of litter. Either the litter is increasing, or it is not being addressed. That is part of beautification, keeping up with what Newington now has. Places that have gotten to be a little old, or neglected should be part of ongoing beautification.

Bill DeMaio agreed that litter has increased and people seem to be less willing to walk five feet to a garbage pail. The monument on the center green will be cleaned up, and there has been a beautification area on the center green. There are one or two guys six days a week picking up garbage for eight hours, and there is a dedicated employee who picks up litter and cigarette butts in the center of town for nineteen hours a week. Maintenance is always being done, isn't flashy, but it is recognized.

Commissioner Pane suggested that at all the signs put out to honor previous citizens, something should be put, flowers for example, to bring out the sign and pay more attention to it. As far as the litter, people have to take more responsibility for their property and the businesses have to step up.

Commissioner Marsden suggested that there be a set of rules and regulations that the people who are using the parks have to adhere to, and that would include cleaning up after their event, and if they didn't, send them a bill.

Bill DeMaio said that signage and rules are only good for the good people who abide by it. Fines don't really work, because the department doesn't have the authority to do that. Maybe a news release should be issued to get people to be more cognizant of picking up after themselves and their neighbors.

The park staff works closely with Erick Hinckley on the blight issues and often the park staff is assigned to trim bushes, cut grass, pull poison ivy, etc. and that is done on a regular basis.

The Center Cemetery with the new fence around it has been upgraded but some of the head stones look very decrepit. The older stones are made of limestone and over time, they crumble. The responsibility is that of the family, so now you have a cemetery that is 200 years old, those

families are long gone, and it is the responsibility of the town, if it is desired but the estimation is that it would be over a half a million dollars to fix some of the broken stones and no grant money is available at the present time.

Chairman Avey brought up to the Commission that perhaps certain areas should be considered first, such as the area coming down Cedar Mountain, having that be a targeted place, coming up from the Berlin turnpike, traveling north down by Eversource by another area, the entrances to town, if feasible.

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, the gardener, at 20 hours per week will start and his mission will be to try to address the welcome areas that have been discussed. However, some of the areas are state property and private property, which would be difficult to address.

Commissioner Stamm stated there are a lot of paper streets, particular from Main Street to Mill Pond. You could go from Wilson Avenue all the way to the Lutheran Church and many of the owners have taken these paper streets and might say it is their land, but there are a lot of walkways. Should we try to develop that, or talk to the people, or give it away and make those paper streets go away and the people could pay for it. If you blow up the GIS for Newington, you get nothing.

Keith indicated that the town is entering into a GIS to be shared with another town, so it was recognized that GIS is not up to date for the town, and the new system will be activated shortly.

If Economic Development is going to take on the responsibility of the beautification project that a plan be developed over the next couple of months, things need to be prioritized, and by mid-summer or late summer go to the Council with a written plan that can be supported and implemented.

Gail Budrejko indicated that a plan by mid-July would help the Council and still have time to solicit ideas from the public, and get something going, hopefully by the end of the year. One or two areas should be able to be part of this plan by then.

Chairman Avey inquired if the Commission wanted to form a sub-committee or just come up with ideas, e-mailing ideas back and forth with the Commission itself, and prioritize a few areas for the next meeting. Member of the Commission were in favor of that idea, and Chairman Avey will start the e-mail with her suggestions and can hopefully all of the members will have ideas to incorporate.

James Krupienski suggested that the ideas come in as suggestions, and not a dialogue, compile the suggestions for the meeting, that a meeting is not being held off line.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

Chairman Avey indicated that 3333 Berlin Turnpike, with the developer going to TPZ to propose stores in the front, and then in the back of the parcel would be apartments, is something that is finally getting some attention.

**VIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Speakers limited to two minutes.)**

None

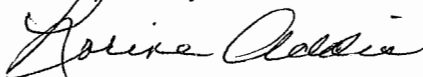
**IX. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Chairman Avey thanked Bill DeMaio for taking time in educating the Commission on the extent of the Parks and Recreation Department and what they do, and thanks to the Town Manager, Keith Chapman for taking time out also.

**X. ADJOURN**

Commissioner Slater moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Marsden. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Norine Addis,  
Recording Secretary