I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

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

Town Council Liaison Carol Anest
Town Council Liaison Gail Budrejko

Economic Development Director Andrew Brecher

ABSENT:

Commissioner Fernando Rosa (excused)

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Rioux made a motion to accept the May 1, 2019 minutes. Commissioner Havens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Director Brecher updated the status of bills with potential to affect development in Newington in the current session of the Connecticut General Assembly: HB5259, HB5260, HB6470/HB7421, SB18/HB7098/File 512. Commissioner Rioux advised of actions taken by the legislature on this, the last day of the 2019 regular session.

Major bills affecting businesses that did pass include increasing the minimum wage in steps from $10.10 to $15.00 per hour over four years and a new family leave program funded by a payroll tax.
Director Brecher summarized recent development activities:

--Draft Transit Village Design District regulations were completed and presented to the Town Council on May 14, 2019. The Town Council further discussed those regulations at their May 28, 2019 meeting. The Town Council could approve sending those regulations to the Town Plan and Zoning Commission for consideration as early as June 11, 2019.

--Local Market Plaza: Some cleanup of the property has occurred. The sale of Best Market’s other locations to LIDL was closed in April 2019.

--3333 Berlin Turnpike: Despite its contract with Eversource being terminated, Grossman Development is still seeking tenants for a possible new proposal to purchase the property.

--Villas at Cedar Mountain: The developers are still pursuing financing. Construction is now estimated to begin in Spring, 2020.

--National Welding: The hotel developer in discussions with the Town has made other projects a higher priority than Newington. Another developer is now determining its interest in building a hotel at that site.

--51 Market Square: Dr. Vanessa Robb purchased the building housing her dental practice for $350,000.

--287 Main Street: The Shop, a barber, opened for business in the last vacant space in the plaza at the northwest corner of Main and Stoddard.

--354 Main Street: Connecticut Security Locksmiths opened. Next door, Carrington Real Estate Services has been renamed to highlight two of its businesses, IRG (International Realty Group) and Vylla Home.

--985 Main Street: Mojo Solar Studio was sold and is open for business under a new operator.

--Fafnir Building: EB Carports continues to move in equipment and material as part of its relocation from Elmwood.

--324 Alumni Road: Foundations have been poured for two new flex buildings.

--65 Holmes Road: The new owners of the Sears Warehouse building have hired Cushman & Wakefield to market the property, with an advertised rate as low as $4.50 per square foot.

--235 Fenn Road: The brokers sign only refers to a small apartment available for rent, not for sale of the 30+ acre property.

--262 Brockett Street: Vida Doce closed on June 2, 2019. South End Café & Pastry expects to open in the same space on June 12, 2019.

--188 Costello Road: A prefabricated building has been erected at the new location of DiCioccio Brothers Landscaping.

--2180 Berlin Turnpike: The “Under Deposit” sign refers to a proposed housing development in Wethersfield that is only accessible by the Berlin Turnpike.

--2186 Berlin Turnpike: All Things Vape opened. Next door, fit up continues for the new Tony Boloney’s Deli.

--2327 Berlin Turnpike: Sign Wiz / Biz Wiz opened in the former Sunset Cleaners space.

--2391 Berlin Turnpike: Artichoke Basille’s received permission from TPZ to add outdoor seating. Construction of a paver patio to accommodate that seating is almost complete.

--2590 Berlin Turnpike: Rae’s Florist, a descendant of Dillon-Chapin Florists, has taken over the space next to Avis/Budget.

--3153 Berlin Turnpike: Renovations have begun for the new tenant, Neptune Cremation Service.

--3311 Berlin Turnpike: The new owner, Express Kitchens, is seeking energy saving subsidies to help fund substantial renovations to the property.

--3443 Berlin Turnpike: Construction of the new O’Reilly Auto Parts store is moving along, with steel erected and their building sign installed.

Director Brecher also reported:

The first batch of bonds and notes were sold for the Town Hall / Community Center construction project at very favorable interest rates. After receiving a AA+ rating from Standard & Poors, the winning bids were just under 2.7% for the long term bonds and 1.57% for the short term notes.
At the request of the Town Council, on May 14, 2019, Director Brecher presented an update on Economic Development Commission activities.

Newington’s “Kindness Counts” program, an initiative of the Parks & Recreation Department, has been warmly received, bringing a host of positive publicity for the community.

A new white picket fence has been erected around the Center Cemetery behind the Congregational Church, significantly improving the appearance of the Town Center at the intersection of Main Street and Cedar Street.

Newington’s unemployment rate has fallen again to 3.2%, the same as December, 2018.

VII. OLD BUSINESS.
A. District Reports
None.
B. Newington Means Business Brochure
Commissioners approved the draft text and nominated pictures to be included. Commissioner Rioux will ask his staff to prepare a professional version of the brochure after receiving the necessary content—and will then circulate it to Commissioners for review. Commissioners also agreed to submit their ideas for a new slogan to replace “Newington Means Business”.
C. Visitation Script
Commissioners agreed with the draft script and agreed that practice would be helpful before utilizing it at businesses where they do not know the owner or manager.
D. What Should Be Our Sales Pitch?
Commissioners tabled this for additional discussion after once again agreeing that Newington’s favorable location was its principal asset.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS
A. Presentation of Transit Village Design District Regulations
Postponed due to technical difficulties.

IX. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT
Pete Forcellina, Executive Director of the Chamber, was unavailable to present the Chamber report.

Several commissioners and Director Brecher attended the Chamber’s Annual Meeting and New Year’s Eve Party, which included announcing the “Best of” winners, on May 31, 2019.
X. CONFIRMATION OF AUGUST 7, 2019 MEETING

Chairman Avey agreed to poll commissioners at the end of June, 2019 as to their availability.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rose Lyons noted she was delighted that the Center Cemetery fence was replaced, while also expressing her displeasure with houses on Cedar Street that she considers an eyesore.

XII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chairman Avey thanked Commissioner Rioux for volunteering the resources of his employer to design the new marketing brochure.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Marsden made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Pane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Sophie Glenn,
Recording Secretary