



# TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2017, 7:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Sean Kelly, Vice Chairman Chris Todd, Regular Members Stanislav Moline and Donna Resutek and Alternates Stefanie Cunningham and Francie Berger

### **OTHERS**

**PRESENT:** David Stavens, Board of Selectmen Liaison

### **STAFF**

**PRESENT:** Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner and Acting Recording Clerk

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None

### **III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:**

Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner, asked the commission to add to the agenda discussion regarding a pending application before the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) that involves two commercially zoned properties.

**MOVED (TODD) SECONDED (BERGER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADD DISCUSSION REGARDING 194 WINDSORVILLE ROAD AND 276 SKINNER ROAD, UNDER ITEM #6, ACTIVE BUSINESS, CURRENT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.**

**BY CONSENSUS, THE COMMISSION MOVED OUT OF AGENDA ORDER TO DISCUSS ACTIVE BUSINESS ITEM #5, TAX INCENTIVE/ABATEMENT PROGRAMS.**

5. Report: Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs

- a. Discussion regarding a potential farm tax abatement ordinance including presentation from the Connecticut Farm Bureau; sample ordinances provided from Woodstock, Mansfield and North Canaan.

Ms. Houlihan noted Oakridge Dairy's project currently underway to construct a 370,000 square foot cow barn and milking parlor on Jobs Hill Road. The project is expected to exceed \$14,000,000 and permit fees already exceed \$100,000. Oakridge Dairy is looking for ways to help reduce costs. Initially discussion focused

on waiving or reducing building permit fees, however there is no viable mechanism available to do that.

Discussion also explored providing tax abatement under the current Tax Abatement Program (TAP); but, as adopted, the TAP does not consider agriculture as an eligible business and routine consideration by the commission is not available. However, the TAP does allow the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to waive any of the program's provisions and may be an option for abatement.

Seth Bahler, Oakridge Dairy and Joan Nicols, Connecticut Farm Bureau were present to discuss another type of abatement program for agricultural activities.

Ms. Nicols reviewed the enabling legislation for three different types of tax abatement/exemption programs for farming. One is for farm buildings, another is for farm equipment and the third is for property tax associated with farms. The general parameters of each program were discussed. Ellington has abatement/exemption programs for farm buildings and farm equipment, but not property taxes for farms.

After deliberation, it was decided to pursue the establishment of an ordinance to allow abatement of property taxes to assist a broad range of farms in Ellington. The commission noted the amount of capital investment Oakridge Dairy is investing in their property. They will revisit asking the BOS to amend the current TAP for Oakridge's current project if the new abatement program is not approved.

The commission asked Ms. Houlihan to draft an ordinance to allow abatement of property taxes for farms. They asked that she investigate what other Connecticut towns have adopted similar ordinances and which of them have also adopted abatement/exemption programs for farm buildings and farm equipment. Commissioner Todd asked if the Assessor could provide an analysis of what the fiscal impact would be if the new program is adopted.

1. Discussion: (CERC) Connecticut Economic Resource Center's self-assessment survey.

CERC provided a proposal for consultant services to help the commission develop a business attraction and retention plan. The proposal has been shared with Chairman Kelly and further discussion is expected at the next meeting.

## **NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS**

2. Report: (Chamber) Tolland County Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Houlihan explained that the Chamber held its annual Legislative Breakfast on December 13, 2016. The event was well attended and included Senator Guglielmo and Representatives Ackert, Belsito, Davis, and Winkler. Discussion focused on the state deficit, the importance of state employee pension reform and elimination of regulatory redundancy in order to reduce costs and improve the business climate in Connecticut.

She explained the upcoming event on February 2, 2017, featuring Comptroller Kevin Lembo. He will discuss the state budget and how to make predictability and stability a part of state finances as well as improving Connecticut's business environment. The

event is free to Chamber members, but space is limited. Commissioners interested in attending should contact the Planning Department for assistance with registration.

The commission referred to the CBI's 2017 Government Affairs Agenda. The Chamber EDC Committee is compiling a set of consensus questions to ask Comptroller Lembo on February 2, 2017. Commissioners are encouraged to forward questions they have to Ms. Houlihan so that she can share them with the Chamber EDC Committee.

3. Report: Agricultural Initiatives - See Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs.

### **NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS**

4. Report: Business Directory/Business Surveys and Site Visits
  - a. GoLocal – Ellington, CT Audience Review – November - December 2016 reports

The commission reviewed the activity reports. Chairman Kelly noted the lull in activity around Thanksgiving and the increased activity in December.

Commission Hurley recalled that the Planning Department was going to contact a couple businesses and help them establish micro-websites to use as samples for other businesses that have not established sites. Ms. Houlihan explained the lack of resources to do that and recalled an idea previously discussed to seek assistance from Ellington High students. She suggested contacting Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Ellington Schools for guidance. The commission supported the effort.

Ms. Houlihan explained that she submitted another article showcasing Shop Ellington for publication in the next Ellington Events. The article encourages patrons to use Shop Ellington and businesses to establish micro-websites. The article includes instructions on how to access the site, how to create a micro-website and lists the contact information for the Planning Department for assistance.

6. Report: Current Economic Activity

Chairman Kelly recused himself from discussion.

The commission discussed the application pending before the PZC that involves 194 Windsorville Road and 276 Skinner Road, both commercially zoned properties. The Windsorville Road property is home to the Buck Stop, a fueling station and convenience store. The Skinner Road parcel has a pre-existing, non-conforming single family home.

Existing conditions and the elements of the proposed site development plan were reviewed. The commission asked questions related to traffic and impact on area businesses.

### **NO MOTIONS OR DECISIONS**

Ms. Houlihan noted that Amped Fitness received PZC approval to locate in the last space to be occupied at the Big Y plaza.

## **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:**

1. Approval of the November 11, 2016 regular meeting minutes.

**MOVED (RESUTEK) SECONDED (CUNNINGHAM) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 11, 2016 MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.**

2. Election of Officers

**MOVED (TODD) SECONDED (CUNNINGHAM) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO NOMINATE SEAN KELLY FOR CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION FOR 2017.**

**CHAIRMAN KELLY ACCEPTED THE NOMINATION.**

**HEARING NO FURTHER NOMINATIONS, NOMINATIONS WERE CLOSED.**

**BY CONCENSUS, CHAIRMAN KELLY WAS ELECTED THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION FOR 2017.**

**MOVED (KELLY) SECONDED (HURLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO NOMINATE CHRIS TODD FOR VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION FOR 2017.**

**VICE CHAIRMAN TODD ACCEPTED THE NOMINATION.**

**HEARING NO FURTHER NOMINATIONS, NOMINATIONS WERE CLOSED.**

**BY CONCENSUS, VICE CHAIRMAN TODD WAS ELECTED THE VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION FOR 2017.**

3. Correspondence:

- a. CBIA's 2017 Government Affairs Agenda – Discussed under Active Business #2

- b. 2017 CEDAS membership renewal

**BY CONSENSUS THE COMMISSION APPROVED THE 2017 CEDAS MEMBERSHIP.**

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOVED (RESUTEK) SECONDED (CUNNINGHAM) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:31 PM.**