



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

55 MAIN STREET – PO BOX 187
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187

www.ellington-ct.gov

TEL. (860) 870-3120 TOWN PLANNER'S OFFICE FAX (860) 870-3122

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017, 7:00 PM

PRESENT: Chairman Sean Kelly, Vice Chairman Chris Todd, and Regular Members Donna Resutek and David Hurley

ABSENT: Alternate Francie Berger and Alternate Stefanie Cunningham

STAFF

PRESENT: Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner and Savannah Blantz, Recording Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS: NONE

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

MOVED (KELLY) SECONDED (RESUTEK) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO MOVE OUT OF AGENDA ORDER AND HEAR ITEM 5. "REPORT: TAX INCENTIVE/ABATEMENT PROGRAMS" FIRST.

5. Report: Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs
 - a. Discussion: Draft Farm Tax Abatement Ordinance

Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner reviewed the draft ordinance with Dory Famiglietti, Town Attorney. She suggests that the ordinance be named Farm Real Property Tax Abatement Ordinance; and, pursuant to language within the Town Charter, that Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen approval be required.

The commission engaged in collaborative discussion regarding the draft ordinance. They compared what farm tax abatements are offered in other Connecticut towns and discussed what sorts of farms should qualify for tax abatement under the new program.

Town Assessor Kim Bechard was in attendance. Ms. Bechard cited the Town's tax exemption programs for farm equipment and buildings and stated that two million in assessment is currently exempted under these programs.

Discussion ensued regarding Public Act 490 (PA-490), an act concerning the taxation and preservation of farm, forest or open space. Ms. Bechard noted that over 300 parcels are currently assessed pursuant to PA-490, and because of past practice the reduced assessment is applied to the total acreage of a parcel regardless of the acreage actually

being farmed. The commission asked Ms. Bechard if the value of land is more than the value of buildings, and Commissioner Todd questioned what the potential fiscal impact would be if the proposed ordinance was passed. The commission also asked how many properties would qualify for abatement under the new ordinance. Ms. Bechard will provide a report for the next meeting.

The commission agreed that the intent of the new ordinance is to incentivize property owners to invest in farming and to help promote and preserve farming in Ellington. They discussed the proposed leased land provision and questioned if current exemption programs should be repealed and replaced with the new ordinance in order to meet objectives. The commission asked Ms. Houlihan to speak with staff from other communities that have farm property tax abatement ordinances to better understand the pros and cons of the program.

Drafting the ordinance was prompted by Oakridge Dairy as a means to provide them with relief from initial fees/ongoing costs associated with the 370,000 square foot barn and milking parlor project they are currently building. They agreed that further investigation was needed.

By consensus, the commission returned to the original order of agenda.

1. Discussion: Connecticut Economic Resource Center's proposal to develop a business retention and attraction strategy.

The commission decided to decline the proposal made by Connecticut Economic Resource Center and to pursue no further action at this time.

2. Report: Tolland County Chamber of Commerce

Nothing to report.

3. Report: Agricultural Initiatives

- a. Pursuant to a letter dated February 14, 2017, notice of award of \$7,200 through the Department of Agriculture's Farm Viability Grant program for a Cost of Community Services Study.

The Cost of Community Services Study will evaluate the cost of services in Ellington and tax revenues generated by three main land uses: residential, farming, and commercial/industrial. The Board of Selectmen will be asked to accept the award of \$7,200 at their meeting on Monday, March 13, 2017.

4. Report: Business Directory/Business Surveys and Site Visits
 - a. GoLocal – Ellington, CT Audience Review – February 2017 report

The commission reviewed the GoLocal Audience Review Report for February 2017. It revealed that nearly 90 percent of visits were new visitors.

6. Report: Current Economic Activity

Luann's Bakery is scheduled to open on March 1, 2017. The Planning and Zoning Commission approved a Dunkin Donuts drive-thru at the BuckStop and a site development plan to overhaul Bolles Motors. Ms. Houlihan explained that Priority Urgent Care opened up at 105 West Road.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. Approval of the February 8, 2017 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED (RESUTEK) SECONDED (KELLY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 8, 2017 MEETING MINUTES AS AMMENDED.

REVISION: Stanislov Moline announced his resignation from the Economic Development Commission on February 8, 2017 and was thanked for his service by the commission.

2. Correspondence: None

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (HURLEY) SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Savannah Blantz, Recording Clerk