



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2022, 7:00 PM

**IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT
REMOTE ATTENDANCE: VIA ZOOM MEETING, INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDED BELOW
(ATTENDEES BELOW WERE IN PERSON UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)**

PRESENT: Chairman Sean Kelly and Regular Member Chris Todd; Remote Attendance: Vice Chairman Donna Resutek and Regular Member Jim Fay

ABSENT: Regular Member David Hurley and Alternates Bryan Platt, Amos Smith and Sam Chang

STAFF

PRESENT: Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner (Remote) and Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk

OTHERS

PRESENT: In-Person: David Stavens, Ellington Board of Selectmen Liaison

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Sean Kelly called the Economic Development Commission meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (on non-agenda items): **None**

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Report: Tolland County Chamber of Commerce

a. 2022 Business Awards Nomination Form

The commission can nominate a fellow chamber business member for any of the four categories that make up the 2022 Business Awards that will be given out by the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce. The categories are Economic Development, Corporate Citizen, Beautification, and Best New Business. Chairman Kelly said that Earthlight Technologies can be nominated for Beautification. Ms. Houlihan said they qualify for the Economic Development category due to their business growth. Part of the tax abatement that was granted to them required that they hire at least 15 new employees when they moved into their headquarters. They have fulfilled this obligation and are a part of the chamber. JRego's Gathering Place is not yet a member of the chamber, although the owner intends to become a member. Chairman Kelly mentioned nominating Juliano's Pools for the Corporate Citizen category, and Vice Chairman Resutek said that might be a good idea due to the work they have done on their property. Ms. Houlihan said this would be complicated because of the work they have done without the proper approvals. Vice Chairman Resutek asked if the commission had nominated DiFiore Ravioli Shop last year, but Commissioner Fay said they only opened a couple of weeks prior to the

last nomination and Ms. Houlihan said they are not members of the chamber. Chairman Kelly said Earthlight Technologies can be nominated for more than one category and the best ones to nominate them for were Economic Development and Beautification. Vice Chairman Resuttek asked if the Big Y Plaza could be nominated, but Ms. Houlihan said they are not chamber members. The commissioners discussed the possibility of nominating Backroads BBQ for the Best New Business category, however their eligibility needs to be verified. The commissioners agreed to nominate The Eyeglass Place in Meadowview Plaza if Backroads BBQ is not a member of the chamber.

Chairman Kelly recommended nominating Luann's Bakery and Café for the Corporate Citizen category. Commissioner Fay said they might qualify for the Economic Development category due to the establishment of their new gluten-free bakery. He said there are people in the community that appreciate it, but he does not know how well it is doing. Chairman Kelly asked if more than one business could be nominated for a category. Ms. Houlihan replied that the chamber will only award one award from each category unless there is a compelling reason to award more.

The commission agreed to nominate Luann's Bakery and Café for the Corporate Citizen category due to their contributions to the community theatre and donations to community groups. The commission also agreed to nominate Earthlight Technologies for the Economic Development and Beautification awards and to nominate Backroads BBQ for the Best New Business award if they are members.

Mr. Stavens asked Ms. Houlihan what it costs businesses to become members of the chamber. She answered that it depends on the type of business and the lowest membership is about \$350 and it is prorated. Some of the membership levels are based on thresholds such as the number of employees. Ms. Houlihan said she would share that with the owner of Backroads BBQ and that the commission would like to nominate his business for the Best New Business award, although he must become a member if he is not already. Some of the benefits of becoming a chamber member as a new business include having a good process for a ribbon cutting ceremony and having contacts with *The Hartford Courant* and the *Journal Inquirer*.

BY CONSENSUS, THE COMMISSION NOMINATED EARTHLIGHT FOR BEAUTIFICATION AWARD AND THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARD FOR THEIR NEW HEADQUARTERS AT 128 WEST ROAD, AND LUANN'S FOR CORPORATE CITIZEN AWARD FOR THEIR DRINK OF THE MONTH AND DONATION OF PROCEEDS PROGRAM AND PROVIDING SPACE TO THE COMMUNITY THEATRE AT 420 SOMERS ROAD.

DISCUSSION: COMMISSIONERS AGREED BACKROADS BBQ IS WORTHY OF BEST NEW BUSINESS AWARD NOMINATION AND ASKED STAFF TO CHECK THEIR ELIGIBILITY, AND, IF NOT ELIGIBLE, TO NOMINATE THE EYEGLASS PLACE, 175 WEST ROAD, MEADOWVIEW PLAZA.

2. Agricultural Initiatives

a. Discussion: Town-wide Farm Day, Saturday, September 17, 2022, 10AM - 3PM.

Ms. Houlihan said there are three farms confirmed to participate in the Town-wide Farm Day. Oakridge Dairy, Sunset Valley, and Frog Hollow Farm are participating in the event. Decarli Equestrian Center might also be participating. The commission will be buying yard signs and advertising the event on social media. Ms. Houlihan suggested developing a "farm crawl" map that users can download and see the participating farms. Chairman Kelly suggested setting a deadline to include participants in the marketing materials. Mr. Stavens asked what people should expect from that day. Chairman Kelly

said the commission would view it as an open house and farms are left to showcase what they are interested in. There are no requirements for participation in the event. Ms. Houlihan noted that the hours for the farm day would work well because participants can go to the farm day event as well as the Farmer's Market.

3. Connecticut Economic Development Association Best Practices

a. Discussion: Program for Municipal Accreditation List of Potential Action Items

Chairman Kelly addressed a survey that the town of Manchester has developed. He suggested implementing a version of this survey to fulfill another one of the criteria for the Connecticut Economic Development Association Best Practices for anyone that has engaged the Planner's Office for applications. Chairman Kelly said he likes the survey and many of the questions would be ones that the town wants to know. Question 4 of the example survey asks those taking the survey how they would rate their experience on the website, and Chairman Kelly said he would like to see that question toward the end of the survey. He also suggested adding a question toward the end that asked if the fees the customer was quoted or had paid were reasonable. Ms. Houlihan said it might be best to expand on the question since the range of fees is diverse.

Vice Chairman Resutek addressed question 12, which asks applicants how familiar they are with the application process. Chairman Kelly said it could be reworded to ask if the application process is what the applicant expected. Commissioner Todd asked Ms. Houlihan if feedback about the length of the application process is meaningful. She said it could be, however much of the process is dictated by state law and the level of complexity of an application. When applying to a land use board, the process is usually between 30 and 45 days. A local construction permit can be generated in five days or less unless approval is needed from the health department. She said a question of this type might substantiate direct employment for a health inspector. The commission agreed to add a question regarding the entire length of the application process when implementing the new survey. Chairman Kelly said a box for additional comments should be included with the question as well.

4. Discussion: Plan of Conservation and Development, Chapter Six - Economic Development, Agriculture as an Economic Sector and Considerations/Strategies (page 95).

i. Zoning Regulation Section 3.1.1(6) Related & Agricultural Uses - Residential Zones

ii. Zoning Regulation Section 4.1 Agriculture - Related & Non Related Uses (1) - Commercial & Industrial Zones

iii. Zoning Regulation Section 7.14 Agricultural Uses

iv. Zoning Regulation Section 10.2 Definition - Agriculturally Related Uses

Ms. Houlihan said the commission has accomplished a lot of the goals set forth in this area for the Plan of Conservation and Development. There is an opportunity for establishing an agriculture advisory committee among the farmers in town. She said regulations were amended to allow wineries and breweries. Chairman Kelly said that in a residential zone compared to a commercial zone, there is less of a desire for agricultural uses depending on proximity to homeowners. Chairman Kelly and Vice Chairman Resutek noted that corn mazes can have a lot of volume and traffic when they are in residential zones. Chairman Kelly suggested making corn mazes a special permit in residential zones and permitted use in commercial zones. He said it's still a good way to market agricultural businesses and it should be encouraged.

5. Report: Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs

Nothing new to report currently.

6. Report: Current Economic Activity

Commissioner Todd said Agway is having their John Deere Day of Play on Saturday, August 13, 2022. Ms. Houlihan said Allyn Tool Company, 162 Maple Avenue, was recently approved for self-storage units to the rear of the existing manufacturing building. The owner contacted Ms. Houlihan and discussed with her the product his company makes and asked if the commission would like to visit his site next month.

BY CONSENSUS, THE COMMISSION AGREED TO CANCEL THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 14, 2022, IN LIEU OF A BUSINESS VISIT AT ALLYN TOOL COMPANY, 162 MAPLE AVENUE.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget & Expenditures update.

The only expenditure the commission has had so far has been \$130 for the part-time recording clerk. The commission will be spending money on signage to advertise the Town-wide Farm Day. Ms. Houlihan said that no signage is needed for the Shop Local event in November of this year because there is some left over from last year.

2. Approval of the June 8, 2022 regular meeting minutes.

MOVED (FAY) SECONDED (RESUTEK) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE JUNE 8, 2022 MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence:

- a. Goman + York Advisory Services, Connecticut's Shifting Demographics, The Dynamics of Demographics and Economic Development, dated December 9, 2021.

This item was left on the agenda for Commissioner Chang, however he's been absent. The item can be added to the agenda in the future.

BY CONSENSUS, THE COMMISSION AGREED TO REMOVE THIS ITEM FROM FUTURE AGENDAS.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (FAY) SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk