



# TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2023, 7:00 PM**

**IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT  
REMOTE ATTENDANCE: ZOOM MEETING**

**PRESENT:** In Person: Chairman Sean Kelly, Regular Members Chris Todd and Jim Fay, and Alternate Mike Swanson; Via Zoom: Vice Chairman Donna Resutek and Regular Member David Hurley (arrived at 7:11 PM)

**ABSENT:** Alternates Sam Chang and Amos Smith

### **STAFF**

**PRESENT:** In Person: Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner and Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk

### **OTHERS**

**PRESENT:** None

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Sean Kelly called the Economic Development Commission meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

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

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

#### **1. Agricultural Initiatives.**

- a. Plan of Conservation and Development, Chapter Six - Economic Development, Agriculture as an Economic Sector and Considerations/Strategies (page 95) – Memo from May 10, 2023, and Draft Text Amendment for Section 7.14 - Agricultural Related Uses.

Commission members received a draft of the agricultural uses regulation and reviewed the drafted changes. On the document containing the proposed changes, anything that is crossed out is proposed to be deleted and anything that is bolded and underlined is proposed to be added.

The commission started by reviewing the changes made on page 6 of 6 of the draft. Ms. Houlihan reviewed the definitions for agriculture, agricultural buildings and structures, and agriculturally related uses. Changes to Article 10, Section 10.2 include outlining agricultural related uses to include events such as farm tours, farm breweries, farm-to-table dinners and other uses approved by the commission. This section also outlines what constitutes a farm-to-table dinner. Commissioner Todd asked about banquets, and whether a banquet hall, such as a wedding facility, would

be considered an agricultural use. Chairman Kelly said the commission talked about adding that as an agricultural related use before, and Ms. Houlihan said she would add it to the section.

The commission then reviewed the first change that appears in the draft text amendment for Section 7.14 on page 3 of 6 of the document under 7.14.3 Special Permit Uses. This section will now state the following:

“The Commission may approve an application for special permit for the following agricultural related uses and shall consider proximity to existing uses, traffic volumes, anticipated commercial traffic, suitability of land, hours of operation, and impact on future farming uses.”

Commissioner Todd said this change addresses part of his previous question involving properties that impact neighborhoods in terms of traffic volumes and parking. He also said that Part D (on page 4 of 6 under Section 7.14.3) outlines specifications for proximity to existing uses. Ms. Houlihan said that building and structures (mentioned under “Setback Requirements” in section D-3) must be located no closer than 100 feet to property lines and outdoor activities must be no closer than 200 feet to property lines. She suggested swapping these rules to regulate that buildings be 200 feet from property lines and outdoor activities be 100 feet from property lines. Chairman Kelly recommended changing it to be 200 feet for buildings and structures and 150 feet for outdoor activities. Ms. Houlihan agreed with the change.

Under Part D-4, an addition is proposed to say, “no parking shall be permitted within 100 feet of an existing residence or residential zone boundary” and that on-street parking is prohibited. It is also recommended that a permeable parking surface (such as grass) be accessible. Ms. Houlihan said that handicap parking standards are already covered by the building code. Commissioner Hurley said this part of the changes looks to be in line with what was talked about last month.

Part D-5 includes changes to access requirements, stating that “Access shall be from a public road and have adequate line of sight for in/egress based on Connecticut Department of Transportation standards.” Chairman Kelly said this addition is appropriate.

Part D-6 says that refuse areas should be screened from public view and shall be located adjacent to buildings and at least 100 feet from adjacent properties. One prior change was made to this section; to spell out the word “feet” so that it is consistent with other times it is used in the document. Commissioner Hurley thought others might want to make the distance further than 100 feet, and Commissioner Swanson suggested changing it to be 150 feet from adjacent properties to be consistent with section D-3. The commission agreed to change it to 150 feet.

Part D-7 on page 5 of 6 addresses buffer standards. Chairman Kelly said a 10-foot vegetated buffer is a wide buffer. Ms. Houlihan noted that the buffer should be put in place “along side and rear yards.” Vice Chairman Resutec expressed concern for those who do not currently have one and are now expected to plant and maintain one. Ms. Houlihan said the regulations already state that the vegetation, when planted and pruned, shall be 6 feet in height. Chairman Kelly said when he read the change, he interpreted it as needing a 10 foot wide vegetated buffer or a fence. Ms. Houlihan said the amendment will be changed to clarify that a 10 foot wide vegetated buffer, a 6 foot high privacy fence or plantings, or a combination thereof shall be used. Chairman Kelly and Ms. Houlihan agreed that the change should mention that

the vegetated buffer should be 6 feet high. Commissioner Todd recommended simply referring to the regulation that is already in place. Commissioner Hurley asked what the buffer was meant for. Commissioner Todd said it is meant to be a buffer between agricultural related uses and adjacent properties. Ms. Houlihan read the buffer requirement in the site plan section, which says that "All new plants shall have a minimum height after planting and pruning of six feet. Acceptable existing trees and shrubs shall be preserved and supplemented with additional plants as deemed necessary by the commission to meet the requirements of privacy for residential zones and abatement of noise, dust, and objectionable lighting."

Commissioner Swanson asked if there might be a point when a business does not need a buffer. Chairman Kelly said a setback would be needed, but Commissioner Todd said that would tie into requirements for adjacent residences. Commissioner Hurley said homeowners might think there would be a buffer between the farm and the residences, but Ms. Houlihan said they are discussing commercial level uses on farms, so agricultural businesses that meet this criterion would be required to put in a buffer. Chairman Kelly reiterated what is said in Part D-7, emphasizing that the buffer may be required, but not always required, indicating that the Planning and Zoning Commission can rule otherwise. Commissioner Hurley expressed concern about this decision possibly having to be made each time by the Planning and Zoning Commission, but Ms. Houlihan said the Site Plan Standards for Planning and Zoning regulations address this requirement when there is a commercial use next to a residential zone. The buffer would be strictly for the area of the commercial activity, not for the entire farm. Ms. Houlihan said the word "shall" should be replaced with the word "may" to clarify the change. Vice Chairman Resutek asked if this regulation would be for agricultural related uses that are already in place. Commissioner Todd said this would be for new agricultural related uses.

Chairman Kelly said that there would need to be a setback between the commercial use and any abutting properties, which has already been accomplished by requiring that outdoor activities be no less than 150 feet from property lines. Commissioner Hurley emphasized wording the policy in such a way that makes it easier for the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Currently, the changes to this part of the Section 7.14.3 would require buildings and structures to be at least 200 feet from property lines, outdoor activities and recreational uses to be at least 150 feet from property lines, and parking areas to be at least 100 feet from property lines for properties of at least ten acres. Part D-7 will now read: "A 10 foot wide buffer may be required along side and rear yards consisting of vegetation, a 6 foot high privacy fence, or a combination thereof to reduce disturbances to adjacent residential zones or residences." A buffer would not be required for certain properties, as determined on a case-by-case basis.

Part D-9 was reviewed but not discussed.

Commissioner Todd asked what the difference between outdoor music and outdoor entertainment was, according to what was written for Part D-10. The commission changed "outdoor music" to "outdoor entertainment" to be more specific about the rule's intentions.

Chairman Kelly read Part D-11. Ms. Houlihan noted the regulation states that food trucks are permitted but should not be the primary agricultural related use.

Chairman Kelly read Part D-12. He said the commission changed the regulation to mention that music should not be amplified but is otherwise permitted.

Chairman Kelly read Part D-14, which states that, “Temporary structures may be permitted from March 28<sup>th</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup> annually.” Chairman Kelly could not recall why March 28<sup>th</sup> was originally chosen at last month’s meeting. The commission discussed changing it to other dates that might make more sense but decided to strike this change to the amendment and leave the regulation to building code.

Ms. Houlihan mentioned that the 3.1.1 Agricultural Uses table was changed from “Related & Agricultural Uses” to “Agricultural Related Uses.”

Ms. Houlihan said she would revise the draft amendment for further review at next month’s meeting.

b. Ellington Farm Day 2023 – Email Invite and Sample “Save the Date” Postcard.

An email was sent to the businesses who participated in Ellington Farm Day last year to see if they want to participate again this year. Businesses that have already confirmed they will participate this year include Dzen’s Garden Market, 187 Windsorville Road; Ellington Farmers’ Market, Arbor Park, Main Street; the Ellington Historical Society – Nellie McKnight Museum, 70 Main Street; Hall Memorial Library, 93 Main Street; Johnny Appleseed’s, 185 West Road; and Oakridge Dairy – The Modern Milkman, 11 Jobs Hill Road. The Planning Department is waiting for a return call from Cohen Farms, 112 West Road; Farm Fresh, 31 Frog Hollow Road; Hillside Stable, 267 Jobs Hill Road; Rothe Farm, 224 Windsorville Road; and SJ Riding Camp, 130 Sandy Beach Road. She noted that Sunset Valley Farms, 55 Kreyssig Road, is unsure if they can participate due to a potential scheduling conflict. A sample flyer from the Granby Open Farm Day 2023 event was shared with commissioners. She was unsure how much the flyers would cost but said she would be working with Ellington Printery.

**MOVED (TODD) SECONDED (FAY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE UP TO \$625.00 FROM THE ADVERTISING BUDGET FOR PRINTING FLYERS FOR THE ELLINGTON FARM DAY 2023 EVENT.**

2. Connecticut Economic Development Association Best Practices

a. Copy of Approved Customer Service Satisfaction Survey and Rollout Discussion.

The survey was reviewed by Planning Department staff and will begin to be issued as of July 1<sup>st</sup>. The survey will only be issued for interactions solely by the Planning Department and will not be issued for enforcement matters.

3. Report: Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs.

a. Ellington Tax Abatement Policy, Amended April 12, 2021, and Canton Business Development Tax Incentive Program.

Commission members were given a copy of the Economic Development Tax Abatement Policy and a copy of the Business Development Tax Incentive Program for the town of Canton. Chairman Kelly discussed how the commission was considering establishing their own business development incentive program to help new businesses in town and to show the town’s support.

Chairman Kelly asked commission members to consider uses for the potential economic development fund prior to next month’s meeting. Ms. Houlihan asked if the program would target a specific business sector or all businesses. The commission agreed it should be for all types of businesses.

Report: Current Economic Activity.

Nothing to report currently.

#### **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:**

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

No new changes to report.

2. Approval of the May 10, 2023, regular meeting minutes.

Change the third line on the second page to read “tasting rooms” instead of “tasing rooms.”

**MOVED (SWANSON) SECONDED (HURLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MAY 10, 2023, MEETING MINUTES AS MODIFIED.**

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

- a. Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes from May 8, 2023, and establishment of Ellington Sustainability Team.

Ms. Houlihan introduced the resumption of activity of the Ellington Sustainability Team – for the purpose of receiving Sustainable CT certification – which was voted on at the May 8, 2023 Board of Selectmen meeting. The group will be co-chaired by Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner and Tom Modzelewski, Superintendent, Department of Public Works. It was also noted that towns who receive Green Snow Pro certification will be able to receive points toward Sustainable CT certification. Chairman Kelly noted that Green Snow Pro is the method by which snow melt is distributed across roadways that does not affect surfaces. He also noted that the 2023 Sustainable Connecticut Certification Action Overview Worksheet will be added to the agenda for next month’s meeting, per Ms. Houlihan’s request.

**BY CONSENSUS, ADD AN ACTIVE BUSINESS ITEM TO THE JULY 12, 2023, AGENDA TO REVIEW THE 2023 SUSTAINABLE CONNECTICUT CERTIFICATION ACTION OVERVIEW WORKSHEET FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RELATED ITEMS.**

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

**MOVED (SWANSON) SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:00 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk