



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024, 7:00 PM

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

PRESENT: In-Person: Chairman Sean Kelly, Regular Member Chris Todd, and Alternate Amos Smith (arrived at 7:05)

Remote Attendance: Vice Chairman Donna Resutek

ABSENT: Regular Members David Hurley and Cynthia Soto, and Alternates Sam Chang and Michael Swanson

STAFF

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

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Sean Kelly called the Economic Development Commission meeting to order at 7:03PM.

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

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs

- a. Memo to the Board of Selectmen, dated June 4, 2024, referring the Commission's recommendation from May 8, 2024, to consider establishing a new ordinance pursuant to CGS Section 12-81m - Municipal option to abate up to fifty per cent of property taxes of dairy farm, fruit orchard, vegetable, nursery, nontraditional or tobacco farm or commercial lobstering business operated on maritime heritage land.

The commission issued a referral to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) for establishing the new ordinance. The BOS referred the proposal to the Ordinance Committee on Monday, June 10, 2024. The ordinance is for farms of a certain size and a certain assessed value to have their property taxes abated up to 50%. Chairman Kelly said there was more conversation and questions from the Selectmen and members of the public in attendance than he expected. He said many of the farmers in town who do not qualify for the abatement supported it. After the Ordinance Committee deliberates the proposal, it will be referred to the BOS and the Board of Finance for review before going to Town Meeting for a vote. Since the BOS meeting, the Ordinance Committee has reached out to Ms. Houlihan and the Town Assessor, and the tentative meeting for the committee is July 1, 2024. At this meeting, the committee will be able to ask questions of the Town Planner and the Town Assessor before sending the ordinance back to the Board of Finance and the BOS.

2. Report: Tolland County Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Houlihan continues to serve on the Economic Development Commission for the Chamber. The commission last met on June 11, 2024. They reported a success from the last annual golf tournament with town reports from Andover, Bolton, Coventry, Tolland, Vernon, and Ellington. Vice Chairman Resuttek asked if the dues to the Chamber had been cut for next year. Ms. Houlihan said the dues that were cut were for the Board of Directors, which she is no longer serving on, so the cut is appropriate.

3. Agricultural Initiatives

Ms. Houlihan asked about the third annual Farm Day. The day is typically planned for September at a date that doesn't conflict with the 4-Town Fair and the Fireman's Carnival. She reached out to the First Selectman's office today to schedule the Farm Day for the third or fourth weekend in September. She will also communicate with the Farmers' Market and Oakridge Dairy to make sure it doesn't conflict with any events or obligations they may have. Chairman Kelly said that Oakridge Dairy has an event coming up at the end of June. Ms. Houlihan said she didn't know about the event until it was advertised and wished they had reached out to coordinate Farm Day with the commission.

4. CEDAS Best Practices – Customer Service Satisfaction Survey Results

One survey was completed after the agenda for this meeting was finalized and posted. Lisa Houlihan noted that the surveys do not factor interaction with other offices, such as the Fire Marshal, the Building Official, or the Health Department. This survey was regarding interaction with John Colonese, Assistant Town Planner, and Barbra Galovich, Land Use Assistant. The surveyor asked questions about general zoning, subdivision, and wetlands regulations. They were referred to the Planning and Zoning Commission and given the process and timeframe involved. The surveyor was very satisfied and shared comments lauding Ms. Galovich and Mr. Colonese. Chairman Kelly said the Planning Department has a well-earned reputation of being helpful and easy to work with.

5. Report: Current Economic Activity

Holiday Pizza opened their new Route 83 location last month. There is a common rumor that a new Mexican restaurant will be going into their old location on Main Street.

The fabric for the roof at the Ellington Racquet Club has been installed.

There's a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Modern Milkman's bottling facility at 80 Meadow Brook Road tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. Ms. Houlihan and John Rainaldi, Town Assessor, will attend, along with First Selectman, Lori Spielman.

The storage facility on Route 83, next to Ellington Printery, is expected to open shortly.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget & Expenditures Update.

The budget report through May 31, 2024, was reviewed.

- a. Revised FY 2024-2025 budget due to reductions approved by the Board of Finance during budget deliberations on June 3, 2024.

Chairman Kelly said the fiscal budget has been cut by more than 10%. The money came out of the commission's Dues and Subscriptions account. Chairman Kelly said he believed if they were to cut something, it would've been Contracted Services. He asked if \$500 could be taken out of the Contracted Services account and moved to Dues and Subscriptions. Ms. Houlihan said it would be appropriate to let it rest as it is. She added that CEDAS is a good membership and if it cannot be covered here, it can be taken out of the Town Planner's

budget. The cuts were made without consultation from staff members unless they were already invited to the meeting. Ms. Houlihan said she thinks it was a good cut and the cost can be covered in the commission's budget or the Town Planner's budget.

Chairman Kelly asked about a \$313 expenditure that was made last year from the Contracted Services account. Ms. Houlihan said it was for signs and advertisements for the Farm Day and Shop Ellington events. Chairman Kelly said there would be some room in that line item and said the commission rarely goes through their allotment of funds. He asked about the process of moving money from one account to another. Ms. Houlihan said it would be an open conversation with the Finance Department to move money from Contracted Services to Dues and Subscriptions. Chairman Kelly said he didn't want Ms. Houlihan to take money out of the Planning Department's budget to cover one of the commission's expenses. The CEDAS and the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce memberships are good until early next year. Commissioner Todd asked if CEDAS and the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce memberships can be reclassified as economic development activities. Ms. Houlihan said she thinks that's possible if the total budget is not exceeded then the commission can move the money within the budget line items. Chairman Kelly said they would return to this discussion in November or December.

2. Approval of the May 8, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (SMITH) SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MAY 8, 2024, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

- a. 2024 Ellington Town Profile from AdvanceCT

According to the 2024 Ellington Town Profile from AdvanceCT, 8% of the town's labor force are self-employed, which is below the state average. Chairman Kelly said he thought the town was ahead of the curve compared to the state average. Ms. Houlihan said data on the labor force is taken from the Department of Labor, while other data is taken from the Office of Policy and Management, Department of Education, and the Census. The current town population is 16,558, which is a slight decrease. The data was taken between 2018 and 2022, according to the report. Chairman Kelly said he was surprised to see Kloter Farms missing from the Key Employers section of the profile. Commissioner Smith noted that this data incorporates the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and noted that many businesses closed during this time. Chairman Kelly said there were a lot of people who weren't working that have returned to the workforce since the pandemic ended. He added that real estate values have been healthy and there are more people looking to move into town than there is inventory available. Commissioner Smith said that housing is one of the major factors that is keeping inflation high.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (SMITH) SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk