



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, FEBRUARY 12, 2025, 7:00 PM

IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT

REMOTE ATTENDANCE: VIA ZOOM MEETING

Commissioners and staff attended the meeting in person unless otherwise noted.

PRESENT: Chairman Sean Kelly, Regular Members Chris Todd and Cynthia Soto (Zoom), and Alternate Amos Smith (Zoom)

ABSENT: Vice Chairman Donna Resutek, Regular Member David Hurley, and Alternate Michael Swanson

STAFF

PRESENT: Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner, Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk (Via Zoom), and John Rainaldi, Town Assessor

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

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

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. 2025 Revaluation Process Presentation, John Rainaldi, Ellington Town Assessor

Chairman Kelly introduced John Rainaldi, Ellington Town Assessor, to the commission to speak about the 2025 revaluation process for the Town of Ellington. John Rainaldi began the presentation commenting on a motor vehicle assessment and tax relief options.

John review a Power Point presentation. He explained the Motor Vehicle Grand List is down 12.4%, because of two statutory changes. One change alters how the value of motor vehicles is determined, stating assessment has been moved to using MSRP minus depreciation schedules. This decrease fairs as average among comparable to other towns. John commented the change will show an immediate drop but may not go down similarly in consecutive years. Additionally, the Grand List decrease was also a result of the new permanent total disabled veteran's exemption, resulting in a Real Estate Grand List decrease of about \$5 million. In total, John noted legislature continues to evolve with new guidelines, which the Assessor's Office will continue to work through.

John next moved onto the Town of Ellington 2025 Revaluation Process, which will be presented on other various platforms to reach all town residents, including the senior center, library and at Earth Day. John began the presentation stating the revaluation is required by statute, the last revaluation was October 1, 2020, and is required every five years. John explained that a revaluation is when the town revalues all the real estate in town and the evaluation date needs to be the same for all assessment, which will be October 1, 2025. In total, the Town of Ellington has over 6,000 real estate accounts and range from vacant land to larger commercial buildings, including but not limited to, small and large farms, entire subdivisions, apartment complexes, state property, and industrial property. John noted that coincidentally, the Public Act 490 Farm,

Forest, and Open Space values are going to be revalued this same year by the Department of Agriculture. John addressed a common misconception that individuals believe this process is to raise taxes. However, John noted that is not true, it is done because it is required by law, one reason being that different properties appreciate or depreciate depending on what kind of market the economy is in. This is not a uniform change, meaning not every property is going to go up or down all at the same time. The process also adjusts inequities in property taxes. John noted the history of revaluation schedules have evolved, different timelines have been tried in the past, but the current statute stands at every five years and there is not change to that schedule on the horizon.

John stressed the importance that a revaluation is to reset values to the current market and to fix any inequities that have come up, to make sure everything is equalized as best possible. This revaluation process will not cost as much as the 2020 revaluation because that was a full revaluation where every property was looked at and without Covid restricts, requires an interior inspection. This revaluation will not include the measure list function, which is less labor intensive. The town does follow up on building permits annually, so anyone who put an addition on their house, tore down a house, built a new house, or put in a pool, etc., it will be picked up. Again, John noted if an individual is a senior or veteran, to make sure you know what exemptions are available to you.

John moved on to discuss the importance of property taxes, particularly in Connecticut, because Connecticut municipalities have a very high dependency on property taxes. The property taxes are the major funding factor for the town, alongside federal and state grants, and other fees. Even so, the bulk of the funding, about 79%, comes from property taxes. Chairman Kelly asked John that based on this statement, is really the only part of revenue that the town can directly control? John answered to an extent yes. In theory, changes in fees in departments like building department fees, for example, is dependent on how many permits taken out. Furthermore, this is dependent on how the economy is doing, whether individuals are spending money on renovations on their houses or not. John stated the Grand List is the tax levy, which is the amount of money a town needs to collect in taxes to cover expenses after counting in the fees, conveyance taxes, etc., the levy is what is left. John remarked that a revaluation project is a significant undertaking and with a small staff, the town hires a third-party vendor from a competitive bid sent out last year. The winning bidder is Municipal Valuation Services, who gave a fair bid and have done numerous towns across Connecticut. The company will not be visiting all properties, but they will visit sale properties to make sure data on sales properties is correct. John said the town will have a list of all the employees for this company who are working on behalf of the town, the police will be notified, and all individuals were vetted with background checks. The Town Assessor's Office is available for any individual with questions or concerns on the matter. Alternate Smith asked John if this is the first time the town is using this particular vendor and if so, why was there a switch? John answered that this company was the only bidder, hence why they were chosen for the project, although it was a very good bid. Chairman Kelly asked if a notification is typically sent to property owner's that someone will be coming to the house for the revalue within a certain timeframe? John answered yes, that is the case when the whole town is being revalued, but in this case with the focus on sales, it is not as well coordinated. The town is working to make sure people will be aware of this project. John stated the biggest change is going to be in home values. John directed the attention to a graph that showed since the last revalue in 2020, there has been a very steep increase in residential values. John stressed that if your assessment goes up, that does not mean your taxes are going to go up as well, there are multiple factors, like town budget, that contribute to tax changes. John shared three real life examples of homes in Ellington from recent sales that emphasized property value increases.

John reported the timeline is the assessment date is October 1st. Typically, the first notice goes out around Veteran's Day and that is the preliminary value, the first value you will be given. John advised people spend look up their home's value prior to revaluation. This can be done either on Realtor.com or other reliable sources around Labor Day, to get a range of where you think the value of your home is to compare to the value provided to you. John shared that there are three levels of appeal process if desired. The first level includes an informal hearing where the individual will provide documentation to support their case to the revaluation company. The second level involves the Board of Assessment Appeals which includes a formal application and testimony. The third level is going to court to revalue the property value. In summary, John advised all residents to conduct their own research into their home value before the revaluation process begins.

Commissioner Todd joined the conversation and asked if the town is talking about a mill rate adjustments given the fact that the vast majority of increases are going to be on homeowners? John answered the town is not specifically talking about this at this time because another budget needs to be completed first and the Grand List will be up long enough where the mill rate is going to come down because the mill rate is not static. The mill rate is the levy divided into the list and the list is going to be much higher. John commented the town has a motor vehicle mill rate cap at 32.46 and could likely fall below that this year, Round table discussion ensued regarding town budget. John concluded the presentation offering assistance and guidance if needed. All questions and concerns on the matter can be directed to the Ellington Assessor's Office.

2. Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs

Chairman Kelly reported no new updates.

3. Report: Tolland County Chamber of Commerce

Chairman Kelly reported no new updates.

4. Agricultural Initiatives

Chairman Kelly reported no new updates.

5. CEDAS

a. Best Practices – Monthly Customer Service Satisfaction Survey Results

Chairman Kelly reported no new updates.

b. Invoice for 2025 Individual and Commission Membership Dues

MOVED (TODD) SECONDED (SMITH) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP WITH THE CONNECTICUT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION AND AUTHORIZE EXPENDITURE OF \$300.00 FROM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION'S DUES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS ACCOUNT.

6. Report: Current Economic Activity

a. No Coast Taqueria Mexican Fusion Restaurant, 12 Main Street, Grand Opening February 4, 2025, Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11AM – 8PM. (To-Go Menu Attached)

Lisa Houlihan explained that a Ribbon Cutting ceremony was held at the new restaurant with the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce and town officials. Lisa said she sampled some of the food and recommended others try it that like Mexican food.

b. New Retail Building, West Road (west side across from Meadowview Plaza).

Chairman Kelly stated that site development and special permit approvals have been approved for a new retail building. Dollar General is the retailer. The new building will be

about 10,000 square feet. Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner, shared that the original design proposed by the applicant was adjusted as requested by the Design Review Board and Planning and Zoning Commission and agreed to by the applicant.

- c. Data Capture Solutions, 160 West Road, Office Building Addition and Renovations.

Chairman Kelly commented on the upcoming renovations at Data Capture Solutions, including re-doing the front building and constructing an addition to the back of the building.

There are no abatement requests for these projects and noted the plans for the projects on West Road incorporate favored architectural designs.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget & Expenditures Update.

Chairman Kelly reported no new updates.

2. Approval of January 8, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (TODD) SECONDED (SOTO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 8, 2025, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.

3. Election of Officers

Chairman Kelly requested the election of officers be moved to the next Economic Development Commission meeting in March 2025 due to attendance reasons. Lisa confirmed this request and by consensus, the election of officers was moved to next month's agenda.

4. Correspondence/Discussion:

Chairman Kelly commented on an item in the commission's meeting packet from AdvanceCT regarding the key five employers in town. Discussion continued about who to include on the list and Lisa read the names of the key five employers currently on the list: Oakridge Dairy, Country Pure Foods, Dymotek, Earthlight, and Barn Yard/Great Country Garages. Chairman Kelly asked if anyone would like to make any changes to the list for the upcoming year. Commissioner Soto asked if the list is based on the number of employees. Chairman Kelly answered, no, that it is a subjective list that identifies signature Ellington business. Lisa added that it is companies that are high profile, that reflect local character and growth trajectory and highlight the most notable companies and institutions. Other companies noted that could be added to the list in future were Skip's Wastewater Services, Ellington Racquet Club, and LuAnn's Bakery and Café.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (SOTO) SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk