



# TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2026, 7:00 PM**

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

**PRESENT:** Chairman Sean Kelly, Vice Chairman Donna Resutek (via Zoom), Regular Members Chris Todd (via Zoom), Cynthia Soto, and Alternate Amos Smith

**ABSENT:** Regular Member David Hurley, and Alternates Michael Swanson and Nicholas Pina

### **STAFF**

**PRESENT:** Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner and Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk

### **I. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Sean Kelly called the Economic Development Commission meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

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

**BY CONSENSUS, ADD DISCUSSION ITEM TO CORRESPONDENCE FOR TOWN SPOTLIGHT IN THE HARTFORD BUSINESS JOURNAL.**

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

1. Review of the Plan of Conservation and Development Implementation Schedule for economic development initiatives.

#### **a. Town Center Village Plan.**

Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner, reported the Town Center Village Plan remains tabled to prioritize state-mandated regulatory work and regional housing initiatives in collaboration with the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and neighboring municipalities. Lisa shared the first phase of middle housing regulations has been completed. The commission will continue to research grant opportunities, with the potential to seek town funding through upcoming capital improvement projects to support a professional study. Additionally, Lisa shared that state bonding and discretionary grant opportunities are generally coordinated through town administration, with department heads submitting project proposals during the annual spring funding cycle. State Representative, Jaime Foster has been sharing funding announcements with municipal leadership.

#### **2. Report: Tolland County Chamber of Commerce**

##### **a. Discuss Taste of Ellington Restaurant Week 2027 – September 21, 2026, Patch article**

Lisa Houlihan provided updates for the commission and explained the Chamber would lead the execution, marketing, and electronic infrastructure of the program, and only require support and local alignment from the EDC and Town Planner rather than direct municipal funding or capital resources. Currently, Lisa is working with the Executive Director of the

Chamber to design the digital platform. Restaurant participation would include a small participation fee and the opportunity to offer specialized promotions, pre-fixed selections, or micro-menus that showcase their culinary style.

Lisa Houlihan presented a digital passport web application featuring participating venues and a QR code displayed at each establishment to be scanned, triggering a digital stamp on the patron's passport. The Chamber's template requires patrons to collect seven individual stamps across a seven-day event to complete the Taste of Ellington challenge and qualify for a prize drawing. Commissioners noted some restaurants are not open seven days a week and agreed that requiring seven distinct restaurant visits within a single week is unrealistic and suggested lowering the threshold to a minimum of three or five stamps. Furthermore, awarding an entry per visit was widely supported as a mechanism to encourage dining while incrementally increasing one's odds to win a prize.

Lisa Houlihan inquired about timing of the event for 2027, with spring highlighted as an optimal timeframe. Calendar conflicts discussed included public school April vacation, cultural and religious observances, and graduations. Commissioners agreed to offer the Chamber a broad date window between April 24<sup>th</sup> and May 9<sup>th</sup>.

### 3. Discuss Economic Development Commission Mission Statement (last revised 3/14/2012)

Commissioners reviewed the current Economic Development Commission (EDC) Mission Statement, approved March 2012. Alongside the Mission Statement, Lisa Houlihan provided commissioners with best practices from the American Planning Association. Discussion centered on whether the mission statement provides enough practical guidance, if it's too broad, and/or if it's detached from operational reality. Commissioners noted the statement explicitly links EDC activity to the Town of Ellington Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). Further discussion included public engagement versus commission leadership, noting a time during the 2019 POCD revision process included extensive and significant community engagement. Commissioners noted the dichotomy of town sentiment, some preferring a hands-off local government, while others expect proactive municipal initiatives to expand local amenities. Lisa clarified that the EDC holds a designated leadership role focused on economic development and business climate, rather than absorbing global town planning. Lisa noted the EDC operating budget was historically higher but reduced by more than 50% limiting the scope of standalone initiatives.

Commissioners discussed the historical evolution of the EDC, with early iterations of the commission's work concentrated heavily on preserving the agricultural and rural character of Ellington, and over time, stakeholder engagement with local farms and business owners transitioned the strategy toward enabling business expansion and removing obstacles from land use rules and regulations. Noteworthy examples of EDC initiatives include the municipal tax abatement program, amendments to the POCD to support local farming economics, and utilization of the Connecticut Economic Development Association (CEDAS) Best Practices to improve municipal standards in land use and economic development. The commissioners agreed to keep the existing Mission Statement as-is for now, but to continue discussion at next month's meeting. Lisa Houlihan will distribute the EDC specific portion of the POCD implementation schedule to commissioners for further discussion.

### 4. Agricultural Initiatives

Lisa Houlihan shared an article provided by Commissioner Smith in which U.S. Representative, Rosa DeLauro announced a \$53 million Farm Recovery and Support Block Grant administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. The grant assists small and specialty crop farms in Connecticut recovering from the severe weather and storm damage incurred during 2023 and

2024. Lisa forwarded the information to the town social media coordinator for official municipal posting and direct outreach was sent to the local farms.

5. CEDAS Best Practices

- a. Monthly Customer Service Satisfaction Survey Results (None received)  
Nothing new to report.

6. Report: Current Economic Activity

- a. Quarterly Ellington Business Networking Event – October 21, 2026, Earthlight Technologies, 128 West Road, 10AM.

Lisa Houlihan reported that 15 town businesses have RSVPed to the upcoming event.

**IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:**

1. Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget & Expenditures Update.

Nothing new to report.

2. Approval of September 9, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes.

**MOVED (SMITH), SECONDED (SOTO) (AND APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY) TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 9, 2026, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.**

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

- a. Discuss email dated October 1, 2026, from Commissioner Soto regarding Shop Ellington ideas.

Commissioner Soto provided members with information about a few programs the Somers EDC oversees: a student mentoring program, business networking events, and an online municipal business directory. Beginning with the online municipal business directory, members discussed cost analysis to offer the concept to the community and noted past efforts Ellington offered for a print and electronic business directory. Print form is costly and local businesses did not use the provided electronic directory enough to warrant the expense for the program. Lisa Houlihan will share the idea with business attendees at the next networking event to gauge interest before submitting any formal budget requests. Second, as the Town and EDC already host reoccurring business networking events, a suggestion was made to gauge interest in an evening event instead of the standing morning sessions. Lisa reminded commissioners the current standing time was set based off feedback from town businesses via an official survey. Third, the student mentoring program was reviewed and commissioners determined that an initiative of this type aligns primarily with the Ellington Youth Services Division rather than falling solely under the EDC.

Commissioner Soto also proposed a new design for the annual Shop Ellington event signage. After review, commissioners agreed that the redesign offered better color coordination and ease of information delivery based on the nature of roadside advertising. Commissioners agreed to remove the fixed date from the design to allow reoccurring usage each year. Pricing for new signs varies depending on the vendor, Lisa will compile quotes and notify commissioners accordingly. Additionally, the commission intends to replace manual paper passports with a mobile digital passport app like the "Taste of Ellington" initiative. This would include scanning of QR codes at participating establishments and participating retailers will be invited to contribute gift baskets or promotional items as drawing incentives for event participants.

**BY CONSENSUS, APPROVED NEW SHOP ELLINGTON SIGN DESIGN.**

- b. Town Spotlight – Hartford Business Journal.

Lisa presented a reduced rate offer of \$250 for a Town Spotlight through the Hartford Business Journal.

**BY CONSENSUS, DECLINED TOWN SPOTLIGHT IN HARTFORD BUSINESS JOURNAL.**

**V. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOVED (SMITH), SECONDED (SOTO) (AND APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY) TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:24 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Ashley DuBois, Recording Clerk