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Minutes of the Suffield Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting
November 19, 2026

Members Present: Gayle Demko, John McGuire, Jeff Girard, Roger Murray, Maria Silvestri

Also Present: Chad Kuzontkoski – Economic Development Specialist, Ellie Binns – Administrative Assistant

1. Chairman, Gayle Demko called the meeting to order at 8:30 A.M. and announced that Maria Silvesti had indicated her willingness to act as a co-chair of the Commission starting in January 2027. Mr. Girard moved to elect Gayle Demko and Maria Silvestri as co-chairs of the EDC with the term to begin in January. Mr. McGuire seconded the motion which was unanimously approved 5-0-0

2. Public Input – None

3. Commission Projects Update

Ms. Silvestri has been following up on the grant proposal for the Town South Green upgrade project and has been consulting with Tom Smith from Springfield Technical Community College to come up with a plan and a rendering to submit a grant application. He has agreed to do the project planning as part of the community service hours that the college requires, but does need a $100 fee for the preliminary design plan. Mr. Murray moved to approve the $100 expenditure for the plans. The motion was seconded by Mr. McGuire and passed unanimously 5-0-0. This will be key to submitting a grant request and another important element will be letters of support which will be requested once the plan is ready.
The group discussed strategies to support local businesses, including conducting a town hall gathering with businesses and leveraging the Observer newspaper for promotions. They agreed to create a multi-pronged approach combining existing efforts like the business calendar and social media presence. The team also addressed signage improvements for the bike trail, deciding to work with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to place signs at specific locations including where the gun club and cross-country ski area signs were. Also discussed was a ribbon cutting ceremony for the kiosk for December 4th which Mr. Kuzontkoski will coordinate. He will also see to a new town seal being installed and an A-frame sign to be added nearby to explain and promote the kiosk.
Ms. Demko reported that she has two quotes for fencing at the fire stations in West Suffield for displaying signs. She will prepare a memo for the selectmen's input on implementing the project at two fire stations as a prototype before potentially expanding to the South Green. Mr. Girard updated the Commission on the progress of the web-based event calendar that he is working on. An update on the dog park shows that the Ratley Road fire house would be the most feasible spot. There was also discuss about getting contact information from local businesses that cater to dog owners for volunteer contacts and outreach. Mr. Kuzontkoski will follow up.
Mr. McGuire reported on his meetings with local restaurants, finding that while revenue challenges exist due to slow housing development, the primary issue is rising costs that restaurants struggle to absorb without reducing clientele. The group discussed potential solutions including creating promotional materials like a restaurant passport program and developing an informational packet about energy efficiency programs and grants. They agreed to invite Pete Hill, a new restaurant owner to their next meeting for his perspective on restaurant business challenges, and to create an informational package for restaurants about available programs given upcoming utility rate increases.

4. EDC Projects Report – Chad Kuzontkoski

Mr. Kuzontkoski distributed his written report which summarized the activities in the Light Industrial, Commercial and Town Center Village District zones for the month. His updates included the Small Business Passport program running November 28th through December 12th, the Winter Farmers Market on December 5th and the upcoming Suffield Alight event on December 12th. He noted that the Planning and Zoning Commission will be hearing an application for an alcohol license for Hometown Arcade, with the commission agreeing to consider providing a letter of support for that application. He also noted that there are two affordable housing applications that will be before the Conservation Commission and Planning and Zoning

5. Minutes – October 15, 2026 Regular Meeting

Mr. Murray moved acceptance of the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. McGuire and approved unanimously 5-0-0.

6. Adjournment

With nothing further to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:36 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Ellie Binns
Recording Secretary