



# **Economic Development Commission**

## **SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, April 26, 2023 | 6:30p.m.**

*Note: This meeting was held at 40 Old Farms Rd and via Zoom*

### **I. Call to Order**

Interim Chairman M.Clark called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

#### **Members Present:**

B.Rankin

S. Hills

M.Clark

### **II. Public Participation**

There was no participation from the public

### **III. Approval of Minutes**

a. March 23, 2023

*Bill Rankin made a motion, second by S.Hills to approve the minutes as presented.*

*All in Favor. Motion Passes Unanimously.*

### **IV. Commission Business**

#### **a. Strategic Plan: Review of Draft RFP**

The Commission held a general discussion about the draft Economic Development Strategic Plan as prepared by Tyche Planning & Policy Group. Matt Clark asked about outreach and coordination with other key boards like Finance, PZC, and Selectmen. John Guskowski suggested that the other boards be sent a copy of the RFP with a notice that it will be published within a couple of weeks and solicit both input and participation in the selection/interview process of consultants. Matt Clark will work with staff to draft a cover memo to other boards soliciting this input. Bill Rankin stated that he thought the RFP reflected the Town's needs. S. Hills asked about the manner of outreach to stakeholders and members of the public, as well as whether housing should be a larger consideration for economic development. John Guskowski noted that a provision in the RFP requested that consultants submit a specific proposal and approach for public and stakeholder outreach so the Town could review a variety of approaches. Mike D'Amato noted that a housing survey was included recently that was a part of the development of the

Town's Affordable Housing Plan and stated that the results of this survey could inform the consultants for the economic development plan. Sam Hills noted that she reached out to the UConn School of Public Policy to solicit student involvement with the strategic plan, and stated that they do not undertake this sort of work right now as part of student capstone projects. She asked if the EDC would like her to reach out to individual professors concerning development of high-quality survey products for this plan, and Matt Clark invited this outreach.

***Motion to move forward with the RFP as proposed by Tyche Planning & Policy Group by S. Hills, seconded by Bill Rankin. Motion carried unanimously.***

#### **b. Welcome to Willington Signage**

Matt Clark stated that the Town will post a solicitation for signage construction on the Town website for a period of three weeks with general specifications for size, construction materials, logo, and content. Once posted, staff will communicate responses with the EDC membership. Costs will determine the number of signs that will be able to be posted. The Commission discussed the potential locations for signage placement.

***Motion to move forward with posting of a signage construction solicitation on the town website by Bill Rankin, seconded by Matt Clark. Motion carried unanimously.***

#### **c. Business Outreach**

Matt Clark reviewed the business list spreadsheets that were assembled by Town staff over the last few years, including a direct business survey and the ARPA data. He then discussed his proposed solicitation questionnaire with ten questions to help understand business interests and needs. He suggested reaching out first by phone, with the EDC members dividing up the outreach duties. Bill Rankin asked about how the data would be compiled, and the Commission discussed reviewing the data and developing follow-up approaches. S. Hills discussed the possibility of finding trends and common responses, as well as proposing to divide up the list first by affinity and then just assigning the rest evenly. Mike D'Amato suggested starting with some of the larger employers and taxpayers with physical locations in Willington. Bill Rankin suggested including family businesses as part of the first group. Staff will narrow the list per the suggestions of the EDC and will circulate it so Commissioners can claim businesses to contact.

Matt Clark discussed the upcoming Willington Day on May 27<sup>th</sup> and he suggested that EDC could have a presence at the event itself. He suggested it would be a good opportunity to interface with residents and business owners. Bill Rankin and Sam Hills agreed it was a good idea. Noting that this was Memorial Day weekend, it was possible that Commissioners may not be available.

#### **d. Upcoming Meeting Date**

The EDC reviewed that their next meeting would be Wednesday, May 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm. Matt Clark noted that he would not be available for that meeting.

### **V. Reports/Correspondence**

None

### **VI. Public Participation**

Matt Pelletier from 227 River Road stated that the recent warehouse discussion created a need to be both more restrictive but also more permissive in certain areas. He explained that the Town should be more specific about the sort of development that they wanted, expressed through general principles and allow businesses to work creatively within those parameters. He discussed the extension of public utilities such as sewer and water was a tricky approach and potentially invited significant, high-pavement development. He suggested working with Village Springs on provision of water to new businesses to encourage development. He offered help with conducting business outreach, and stated that he supported an EDC presence at Willington Day, as well as the importance of keeping the public informed about the strategic planning process.

Nick Tella from Mrtl Road noted that the PoCD should be an important consideration.

### **VII. Adjournment**

*Motion to adjourn the meeting by S. Hills, seconded by Matt Clark. Motion carried unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



John Guskowski, AICP, CZEO

Economic Development Consultant