

Town of Bloomfield
Economic Development Commission Meeting
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #5
APPROVED MINUTES
TUESDAY, July 12, 2016

Present: Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Michelle Bononi, Fred Hesketh, Jerry Katrichis, Richard McDermott, and Harold Harper.

Also present: Director of Planning and Economic Development Director, José Giner, Mark Weisman, Don Poland, Mike Goman, Rick Hughes, Kevin Gough, Steven Vaughn and Laura James, Recording Secretary.

1. Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

2. **Minutes of June 14, 2016 regular meeting**

Commissioner Bononi made a motion to accept the minutes of June 14, 2016. Commissioner Bercowetz seconded the motion, and the motion passed. Chairman Long abstained.

3. **Public Comment**

No comments

4. **Discussion of the mission and role of the EDC**

There was a discussion of the mission and role of the EDC.

Chairman Long stated there seems to be a little competition between the EDC and the Town Council Land Use and Economic Development Subcommittee which is troubling. Maybe EDC should be looking more at putting the Town of Bloomfield on the map.

Mr. Giner handed out the copies of the Bylaws, Town Charter, and State Statutes.

Commissioner Bononi stated it is always a good idea to have checks and balances in place in regard to what the Town Council and the EDC are doing. Commissioner Bononi stated the EDC has accomplished a lot, but the EDC does not have any funds to further promote the Town. Commissioner Bononi also stated the Land Use/Economic Development Sub-Committee and the EDC should be meeting from time to time, which would be a good opportunity to define roles of both groups better.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated the Land Use/Economic Development Sub-Committee holds open meetings and EDC could recommend or appoint someone to attend the meetings.

Commissioner Bercowetz asked Mr. Giner to send the EDC a reminder and agenda of the Land Use/Economic Development Sub-Committee's next meetings.

Mr. Giner stated the next meeting is a week from today in the evening. Commissioner Bononi asked Mr. Giner if the EDC could receive the Land Use/Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting minutes.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated it is EDC's role to attend the Land Use/Economic Development Sub-Committee meetings as EDC members rather than as private individuals.

Commissioner McDermott stated the EDC is not being taken seriously and doesn't see the EDC as having any real power, just a recommending body and he is not sure how to get past this issue. He stated that more input from EDC needs to happen somehow.

Commissioner Katrichis stated he is pro economic development and that the EDC should be making recommendations that would improve the Town's economy.

Commissioner Harper stated the EDC could start by reviewing the EDC's Bylaws and look at what the EDC has a right to do. The EDC needs to be more persistent in making sure the Commission's voice is being heard. Commissioner Harper also stated there is a need to build bridges between the EDC and the Town Council and Land Use/Economic Development Sub-Committee and attend meetings making sure the EDC voice is being heard.

Commissioner Bononi further stated it seems that the way government is done in Bloomfield flies under the radar. Commissioner Bononi asked why there isn't any press in the Town of Bloomfield.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated the Town does have a decent correspondent with the Hartford Courant through Steve Goode.

Commissioner Bononi spoke of the Town of Bloomfield's poor website. Mr. Giner stated the whole website is currently under construction and hopefully will be done before the end of summer.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated this is a very exciting time in Bloomfield and EDC has the opportunity to be in the forefront. She stated that she believes the EDC needs to be representing the citizens of Bloomfield.

Mr. Goman stated the EDC is a very good Commission in comparison to other Towns. Mr. Goman stated EDC struggles with lack of funding, and lack of authority and that other Commissions have some of the same struggles.

Mr. Poland explained the differences between the EDC and other Commissions, such as the Planning and Zoning.

Mr. Goman stated EDC should be the catalyst for holding joint meetings. Mr. Poland stated the EDC needs to be actively engaged with the Land Use/Economic Development Sub-Committee.

Commissioner Bercowetz again stated that she feels EDC is the voice of the people.

Commissioner Bononi stated that she feels the Town Council is not necessarily tuned in all the time on Economic Development.

Mr. Goman stated EDC should view themselves as caretakers of the curb appeal for the Town, because when the curb appeal starts to deteriorate so does the Town. Mr. Goman again stated there should be greater communication between EDC and the Land Use/Economic Development Sub-Committee. Mr. Goman also discussed how the EDC could participate in a Priority Setting Session that his firm had done in other communities. The session would run for two evenings, one weeknight session and one Saturday session. They could invite anyone that the EDC would like to attend, and ask people to write down the priorities for the Town and gather a consensus of the top five. On the third night the findings would be presented and that's what the Commission and Council would focus on. This is something that Goman+York can coordinate if it is something the EDC would like to do.

Mr. Poland stated it is an action agenda. Commissioner Bononi stated she disagrees with the time frame. The session should be more of a three-hour brainstorming process and absorbed in Goman & York's budget. The idea should be pitched to Mr. Schenck and it should be televised. It should be simple, short, and to the point.

Mr. Goman stated it was no problem in doing the session as part of their contract. Commissioner Bercowetz stated the public should be made aware of what the EDC can and cannot do as part of

the session. Chairman Long stated he would like to see the East side of Bloomfield get involved in the session as well.

Commissioner Bononi made a motion to further discuss with Goman & York the potential for a Priority Setting Session with EDC. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Katrichis and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Bononi further discussed different phrases for the EDC to think about and consider for its mission and possibly come up with a phrase before the next meeting. Commissioner Bononi stated she will email to Mr. Giner for distribution to EDC.

5. Other

Next meeting will be August 23, 2016. Mr. Giner stated he met with the owner of Wintonbury Mall. All of the light bulbs were changed to LED. He is also doing some curb appeal projects. An Urgent Care Center is going in Wintonbury Mall and a church coming in as well - the church will be open two nights a week. Mr. Giner stated he also suggested sidewalks and planters to make the Mall more pedestrian friendly.

6. Public Comment

Mr. Mark Weisman stated there needs to be more talk from Town Council regarding Economic Development and its impact.

Mr. Kevin Gough, 5 Bear Ridge Dr, Mr. Gough stated Simsbury is working on revising charter to eliminate EDC and also considering a Town Manager form of government. He agreed that Curb appeal is very important. He feels that this was a good discussion regarding EDC's role, but it needs to be better defined.

7. Adjournment

Commissioner Bononi made a motion to adjourn at 10:30 a.m. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Bercowetz and passed unanimously.