

# The Town of Brooklyn Economic Development Commission

Chairperson, Robert Simons

(860)774-6544

*Meeting the First Tuesday of every month @ 4pm at the  
Clifford B Green Memorial Center*

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**Tuesday, January 3, 2017**

**Members present:** Marybeth Leonard, Cary Garcia, Robert Simons, Chris Landis, Ronald Ventura

**Members of the Public of Note:** Richard Ives – First Selectmen; AJ Kerouac – P&Z

- 1) Call to order - Robert Simons, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm
- 2) Mrs. Garcia made a motion to seat alternates. Motion seconded by Mr. Landis. Motion passes unanimously.
  - Discussion regarding seating of alternates – Mr. Simons informed the group that alternates should be seated in the audience rather than at the table. Then if there is motion to have them seated to take the place of an absent member, they will be formally invited to come to the other members at the table. This will act as a reminder to everyone that alternates have no voice or vote until invited to replace an absent member.
- 3) Approval of Minutes: Mrs. Garcia made a motion to accept the regular meeting minutes of December 6, 2016 as presented. Motion seconded by Mrs. Leonard. Motion passes unanimously.
- 4) Resignation of Andy Pinto – Mr. Simons received an email on 12/15 from Mr. Pinto stated that he would be resigning from the EDC effective in January. Mr. Simons was not given a specific reason for the resignation and asked members to ask Mr. Pinto his reason for leaving should they see him.
- 5) Budget Review – Mr. Simons presented the EDC budget for 2016-2017 for review as a guide to the 2017-2018 budget which should be submitted after the next meeting.
  - Mr. Ives stated that he will look into making sure the EDC receives a copy of all bills.
  - Mr. Ives stated that the part-time coordinator position needs to be included in the new budget including a salary and other related expenses to the hiring of a part-time EDC Coordinator.
- 6) Unfinished Business
  - a) Brooklyn Business Association (BBA)
    - Mrs. Garcia reported that the Holiday Party was held December 20<sup>th</sup> at the Barn at Gray Mare Hill, hosted by Mrs. Leonard and her husband. It was well attended and a very nice event.
    - Although it has not been formally announced, the annual meeting is likely to be scheduled for January 17<sup>th</sup> at Hank's Restaurant at 5:30.

b) Business Recognition

- Mrs. Leonard has been in contact with Brooklyn Pizza, Integrity Auto, and Crossfit Aisling but they are not ready for presentations yet. She will attempt to contact The Barber Shop (new location) and the new law firm that now resides where the Barber Shop formerly was. Other possibilities include RC Central and Sweets Farm.
- Turnpike Buyer ads. Brooklyn Farm, Pet & Hardware's ad needs to be submitted. The other two businesses that received plaques on the same day submitted their own information. It needs to be determined if they will submit their own information to the Turnpike Buyer or if EDC will.
- A photographer is needed for the business recognition photos. Mrs. Leonard reports that Carlene Kelleher is willing to take pictures as she has done so for EDC in the past.
- There was discussion regarding whether to invite Northeast CT Chamber to all plaque presentations. Some felt they may not be interested unless the business is a Chamber member. However, the group felt that it would be a nice gesture to invite them to participate if they wish to.

c) EDC webpage

- Mrs. Garcia reported that she has not made any further changes and again encourages all commissioners to review it for content and provide feedback at the next meeting.
- Access to available commercial properties on the webpage. Mrs. Leonard reported that Browning & Browning has now joined Weichert Realtors. While Mark Benard is still willing to help the EDC obtain access to this information, he has to seek corporate approval. Mrs. Leonard hopes to have an update by the next meeting.

7) New Business

a.) Economic Development Coordinator Position

- Mr. Ives encourages the EDC to propose in the budget that the coordinator would be essential to reaching EDC/Town goals.
- The EDC needs to present obtainable goals and visions and come up with a plan for the Planned Commercial Zone on Route 6 that will be carried out by the coordinator.
- Mr. Ives reports that the Town budget has been cut twice already and he expects another before July, but feels it is important to move forward.
- Mr. Ventura suggested that rather than provide specifics, it may be beneficial to present a more broad idea, such as the pattern Putnam has taken over the years. First, antiques, then restaurants, and now entertainments (playhouses, restaurants with entertainment, etc.).
- Mr. Simons suggested focusing on what we have that draws people to Brooklyn such as the Fairgrounds. Mrs. Leonard added that the Fall Festival has become a tourist event.
- Mrs. Garcia suggested that while the fairgrounds draw people seasonally, it is important to focus on the daily flow of traffic. Perhaps travel accommodations, more restaurants, and capitalizing on the proximity to 395 is the key. The group felt that with Brooklyn's distance from 395, travelers are not likely to stop as compared to Dayville's proximity.
- Mr. Ives feels façade improvements would greatly help and there are a number of programs and grants to help. However, business owners have to be willing to share the cost of the

improvements. He stated that many business owners are content with the façade of their businesses and are not interested in spending on any upgrades.

- Mr. Ives reported that Windham County is ranked as the 50<sup>th</sup> poorest county in the country, which does not make for an attractive demographic presentation for businesses to move to Brooklyn.
- Mr. Simons also suggested that since we have success in the auto industry with dealerships and parts stores, that more dealerships may be a good option. Mr. Ives pointed out that there is a lack of available large space that could accommodate another dealership, particularly with frontage.
- Mr. Ventura pointed out that the two sections of town – PCZ and the village center must be treated differently altogether.
- The group agreed that these unique challenges are the primary reason Brooklyn needs this part-time position. An approximate salary of \$25K-\$30K will be included in the budget along with some ancillary expenses to cover mileage, etc.

8) Adjournment - Motion to adjourn at 4:50 pm by MaryBeth Leonard. Second by Ronald Ventura. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cary Garcia, Secretary