

**TOWN OF BARKHAMSTED
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
BARKHAMSTED HIGHWAY GARAGE
COMMUNITY ROOM
THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022
7:00 PM**

- 1. Call to order**
- 2. Public Comment**
- 3. Review and approve minutes from February 17, 2022 Meeting**
- 4. Update on Community Garden – Dave Lewis**
- 5. Discussion of 2022 initiatives to promote economic development, including use of ARPA funds**
 - a. Discussion of broadband services/task force for town residents and businesses**
 - b. Discover Litchfield Hills and Town website/tourist map**
 - c. Proposal for town-wide business “bingo”**
 - d. Scope of Work for Economic Development Director**
- 6. Discussion of business promotion strategy (assist current businesses, attract workers, attract new businesses)**

**Town of Barkhamsted
Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
Zoom meeting
February 17, 2022**

Recording available at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/qxsfjMQZtuvj3OFYIfLmoYEBKxAOPqgSKOwLNFaxSTsLY7LZiQqTDRStFUTTXQPD.Itd6lYnj5UyRjbKq>

Meeting called to order at 7:05 PM

Attending members: Bob Pulford, Brian Johnson, Kathy Williams, and Kevin Noblet. Also present was Don Stein, First Selectman. Bob Pulford was the Acting Chair, due to Tim Deschenes-Desmond's absence.

Review of minutes: On a motion by Kevin Noblet, seconded by Brian Johnson, and passed unanimously, the minutes of the February 17, 2021, Meeting were approved.

Discussion: Don Stein reported that Dave Lewis stated that there were 6 open beds still available to interested residents and that he will start advertising them later in February. He still is interested in looking for a shed to house tools and implements, but may be able to wait another year by using a section of the shed belonging to the Church. He has been sending out information to the gardeners to help them get the upcoming season started and will plan to come to the March EDC meeting to brief the Commission. Don Stein mentioned that the Northwest Community Foundation and the Northwest Community Savings Bank both have grant programs and a grant application for a shed for the garden would have a good probability of being approved. The estimated cost of around \$2500 is in the right range for these organizations.

Discussion:

- Don Stein reported that we will proceed to hire Sertex to do a survey of the town to determine the best strategy for implementing high speed fiber optic internet. That will cost \$30,000 and be covered by ARPA funds.

- In addition, Don, Kevin and Brian participated in a meeting with Civitas who installs 5G wireless broadband, which is relatively high speed with symmetric upload and download capabilities. It is limited to 500MB, which is not as good as fiber optic to the home, and which is also not economically viable in a rural, hilly town like Barkhamsted. After discussing this situation, it was suggested that we consider installing fiber in the few areas in town that already have it (the school, town hall, and the 3 firehouses. This could be small, local installations to show

the effectiveness of the fiber optics vs. cable internet. This is a separate issue from the lack of cell service in Riverton, but that also needs to be addressed for the benefits of the merchants and the residents.

- Kevin Noblet reported that no progress had made to integrate the tourist map into Discover Litchfield Hills and the Town website. Don Stein said he would set up a meeting with Evan Dobos, who owns our website provider and who also does DLH to see if we can break this issue free and get the work done.

- Don Stein told the members that the recommendation has been made by the Selectmen to share Winsted's part-time Economic Development Director (Ted Shafer, former Burlington First Selectman) under the ARPA funds. The EDC members still felt that it would be worth trying for a year assuming that an appropriate Scope of Work could be defined. That SOW will be the next step to be worked out with Winsted and the other town commissions.

- Debbie Brydon and Erica Dyndiuk had suggested that the EDC consider doing a "merchants' bingo" that would incentivize folks to patronize local businesses to fill out a bingo card and receive gift cards and be entered into a drawing for large prizes. It was suggested that the EDC, with help from Debbie and Erica, start working on finalizing the roster of businesses and soliciting prizes or contributions for this event. The flyer from Amesbury, MA, who ran a similar game this February for 1 month is attached. This will be discussed further at the next EDC meeting.

- Kathy Williams had prepared an email (presented below) for discussion with the EDC
 1. In person meet and greet targeting, but not limited to businesses that would benefit from a more active involvement with the Discover Litchfield Hills website. Program to include ways to maximize the free business listing, how to post events, create stories, benefits, etc. Also include overview of the Visit Ct website and benefits to local businesses. After meeting, in-person follow up with targeted businesses that did not attend mtg.
 2. Work with DLH to have an in-depth story written on a local business. Suggest monthly - selecting one business to feature. Possible task for economic development director. Also consider feature story on key town events.
 3. Develop a quarterly business e-newsletter featuring topics such as updates on town and regional initiatives, pending state legislation, tourism promotions, introduction to new business in town, etc. Possible task for EDD.

4. Reinstate the Welcome Bag program including information on town businesses (brochures, menus, coupons, etc.) and non-profit organizations (brochures, membership apps). Encourage new residents to join the town newsletter.
5. Improve the functionality of the Places tab on the town website.

This information was discussed among the members and it was felt that further discussion was necessary with Betsy Paynter, who is working with the Council of Governments on economic development, with Evan Dobos, from DLH, and with Ted Shafer, assuming the town does hire him on a part-time basis.

The date for the business meet-and-greet was set for June 16 at the Old Riverton Inn, assuming they are receptive and it was planned to include some details on DLH to see if we can the merchants to use if more.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49PM on a motion by Kevin Noblet, seconded by Brian Johnson.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Stein