

Town of Barkhamsted
Economic Development Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
Town Hall
March 30, 2023

Meeting called to order at 7:05 PM

Attendees: Tim Deschenes-Desmond, Bob Pulford, Linda Ganem, Todd Winkler, Bob Geiger. Also in attendance was Don Stein, First Selectman.

No members of the public were in attendance.

Motion: On a motion by Bob Pulford, seconded by Todd Winkler, the minutes of the February 16, 2023, Special Meeting were approved on a unanimous vote.

Discussion: The EDC discussed Ted Shafer's role as the Economic Development consultant and his plans for the rest of the fiscal year. The Board of Finance requested that funding for the position be removed from the General Government budget and that it be moved to the ARPA allocation like it had been this year. While it is likely that the position will be continued into the next fiscal year, it is not guaranteed. Much of the discussion centered on how we can get the best leverage from this expenditure. Much of it relies on Ted meeting the objectives he has set that have measurable accomplishments.

There was also a lot of discussion that the Town needs to figure out a way to help the new owners of the drive-in and the whole 40 acre parcel be successful, since the drive-in is a very important economic driver for the town. There was also some discussion about the town trying to buy the drive-in and then leasing it out, but that is not a real possibility since the new owners have been clear they are interested in trying to make a go of it.

DISCUSSION: Tim Deschenes-Desmond presented the status of the Community Garden which has been a great success under the leadership of Dave Lewis with help from Tim, Ginny Apple, Bob Pulford and others. All beds will be fully rented again this year and there will be a work party on the opening day of May 6. Dave would like to have a shed at the garden site for storage of equipment and materials. Right now, the garden fund has about \$1000 and another \$500-600 should be available after new members sign up. After bouncing around ideas, the tentative plan is to buy the lumber and have volunteers actually build the shed. This is viable as several the members have the skill to undertake this project.

The other idea that was floated was to paint the water tank with decorative items (flowers, plants, etc.) to make it more attractive. This was proposed by Cibby Cohen and was well received by the EDC members.

DISCUSSION: Don Stein presented the status of the installation in Town of fiber optic cable by Frontier. They are making good progress, but it appears that there will be some small number of houses that they will not cover unless there is additional funding provided by the Town. Don Stein is working to minimize that shortfall, and is putting pressure on Frontier not to lose momentum.

DISCUSSION: The following initiatives were discussed with the responsibility being assigned for some of them:

- Discover Litchfield Hills and the Town website to get as many of our activities as possible out to the public and to make other communities aware of what is happening in town.
- Town wide business bingo (Ted Shafer)
- Welcome Bags (Kathy Williams)
- Joint meeting with Winsted to discuss areas of common interest (Ted Shafer)
- Bob Geiger said that there is an individual living in Colebrook who is an award winning photojournalist and who has published books on other areas highlighting those areas. Steve Lehman would like to do a book on the region (or the town) similar to his other works. Bob Geiger and Don Stein will meet with him and introduce him to the Council of Governments (NHCOG) to see if this is something they could sponsor and help with the organizing.
- The Blacksmith Guild is interested in using the Fairgrounds for their annual meeting, so Don Stein and Tim will meet with the Board of the Union Agricultural Society to see if that would work for them. They are also committed to doing more stuff at the Fairgrounds, which would be a big help to the Community and particularly Riverton.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Stein

Barkhamsted EDC Meeting

2/16/2023

Status Report – Economic Development Director

Retention of Businesses

Recent visits to local businesses/discussions with store staff:

- Sterling Engineering - Eric Lee
- Goulet Printing - Rick & Cy Goulet
- Riverton General Store
- Riverton Self Storage
- Log House Restaurant
- Ollie's – Mallory Brook Park
- T mobile phone store – Mallory Brook Plaza
- Subway – Mallory Brook Plaza
- Lombard Ford
- Upcoming meeting with Boulder Ridge / Ebner Camps
- Winsted Feed Supplies (Barkhamsted)
- Pleasant Valley General Store
- Bakery - Riverton

Recruitment of Businesses

- Mallory Brook Plaza: Tractor Supply Store and Apple Cinema scenarios. Food Market? Ames?
- Hitchcock Chair Store/Self Storage – Riverton
- Contact with Winsted / Farmington Valley/ NW CT - Developers & Merchants
- Pop-up Stores concept
- What new businesses would Town like to attract??

Other

- Ralph Nader local community newspaper - first copies to Town Hall & Riverton General Store
- Update meetings with First Selectman
- Bank & SBA lending programs
- Attending NW CT Chamber of Commerce events
- Reached out to Evan Dobos – Discover Litchfield Hills and Town website tourist map

Future Activities/Events

- Regional Manufacturers gathering/forum in Fall 2023 (potential topics: workforce development, NCCC mfg training programs & high school engagement and transportation)
- Feb 17th Small Business Workshop in Torrington. Breakfast with guest speakers

- EDC & First Selectman visit to Sterling Engineering Eric Ross - VP of Operations.
- Joint Winchester (Winsted) & Barkhamsted Sustainable CT workshop or event
- Ongoing discussions with owner regarding re-purposing country store/gas station on route 44.
- Grant opportunities – USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program. Application due 5/2. Regional? Towns funding match component.
- EV Charging Stations

To be discussed later in EDC meeting agenda

- Discussion of Community Gardens
- Update on Broadband - Fiber Optic Services
- Proposal for town wide business “bingo” (prizes? / myfreebingocards.com) and welcome bags
- 2023 economic development initiatives
- Discover Litchfield Hills and Town website/tourist map – Evan Dobos - operations backlog