

APPROVAL OF MINUTES Economic Development Commission  
Meeting Minutes - **DRAFT**

Wednesday, August 31, 2011

CALL TO ORDER

David Dean, EDC Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Regular members, Renee Betar, Kay Carroll, David Dean, Cleve Fuessenich, Lee Losee, and Doug Parker were present. Alternates William Conti and Mitchell Fishman were present.

Regular members, Judy Elliott and Alexander VandenBerg. were absent.

Barbara Putnam, Litchfield Planning and Zoning Chair and Ricky Campbell, Register-Citizen Reporter, were present.

APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

William Conti for Alexander VandenBerg  
Mitchell Fishman for Judy Elliot

APPROVAL OF JUNE 29, 2011 MINUTES

M. Fishman made a motion to accept the minutes of the June 29, 2011 meeting, as read. B.Conti seconded the motion; it passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Barbara Putnam, Litchfield Planning and Zoning Chair, was present at the request of the Planning and Zoning Commission to solicit EDC feedback on sandwich board sign zoning regulations. Noting that some P&Z sign regulations are not being enforced, about a year ago, B. Putnam shared that Denis Tobin suggested a moratorium on enforcement while P&Z reconciles conflicting sentiment regarding sandwich boards: (1) Business community needs every promotional tool including sandwich board signs, especially in this business environment. A ban on sandwich boards would be detrimental to business. (2) Allowing sandwich boards poses potential problems including aesthetic, safety, and incongruence with historic town.

P&Z - Restrictions on size, height and location

Feedback from EDC members:

- 1) L. Losee:
  - a. Referring to Borough regulations, clarified Borough signs regulations at the request of D. Dean: All signs need permission and borough approval. Sandwich boards are allowed in the defined borough business block. Individual homeowners can use signs on their own property to advertise their own products and services.

- b. Younger generation is using technology to find businesses – not great need for sandwich boards (supplemental not absolute necessity).
  - c. Agrees borough regulations should be different than P&Z regulations
- 2)
- a. B. Conti:  
Pro business examples:
    - i. Common Grounds location in back of building had to rely on sandwich board signs on Rte. 202
    - ii. On the Green – new business – has and needs “open” sandwich board
  - b. Issue of control – continuum from none to unlimited. Elected official can find fair medium.
  - c. Consider looking at regulations for all signs not just sandwich boards.
- 3)
- a. C. Fuessenich:  
Re. Borough regulations: How to differentiate between an owner and a renter,
  - b. Noted sandwich boards signs are temporary in nature; If sandwich boards are allowed, “temporary” needs clear definition
- 4)
- M. Fishman: Consider a ban on all sandwich boards to preserve a more historic landscape.
- 5)
- a. K. Carroll:  
Litchfield Hills Farm – Fresh Market relies on sandwich boards - necessity
  - b. P&Z sign regulations should be different than Borough sign regulations. Most businesses in borough are on first floor and have some exposure v. out-of borough business need sandwich board exposure
- 6)
- D. Dean: Don’t want to interfere in economic development especially in this economic environment.
- 7)
- a. D. Parker:  
Researched existing sandwich board sign regulations in State of CT. Suggested P&Z look at regulations from Glastonbury and Gilford.
- 8)
- R. Betar shared other examples of regulations for towns similar to Litchfield.

B. Putnam agrees P&Z signs regulations should reference Borough sign regulations and clearly identify clear responsibilities for each entity. B. Putnam will digest EDC feedback and report back to P&Z as instructed. B. Putnam thanked EDC members for their thoughtful feedback.

LITCHFIELD JAIL

K. Carroll reported that bids are closed. State received two low bids. Town of Litchfield voted not to bid, but still has option to bid again if additional bids are received. Litchfield Historic Preservation Trust final report, including possible uses, should be available very soon.

D. Parker inquired whether any property tax incentives are available. K. Carroll and C. Fuessenich confirmed availability of federal tax incentives but no abatement of town property taxes.

Motion was made by C. Fuessenich: EDC should suggest to BOS that they explore feasibility of local property tax abatement for potential owner of jail. Kay Carroll seconded the motion. Motion passed with unanimous approval.

L. Losee raised the possibility of contacting a company such as Correctional Corporate of America to explore the feasibility of continued use as a jail versus prohibited expensive of conversion to other use. . K. Carroll encouraged consideration of any legitimate use of this historic property.

### **MONTHLY UPDATES**

- Litchfield Hills Food Systems:  
Kay Carroll reported the Saturday Farmer-Fresh Market activity is strong and the traffic concerns were resolved despite varied and changing construction obstacles.
- NW CT Economic Development Corporation  
Doug Parker reported the EDA funding decisions have finally been given the green light to move forward with CEDS initiatives. Mark Waterhouse is the consultant hired to guide and help implement.
- Commercial Properties-New Listings/Changes: D. Parker reported:
  - 1) Talbots closed in August.
  - 2) Abel Darling B&B has closed; owner is moving to Florida.
- Conservation: C. Fuessenich reported the commission is working on a plan for administering funds to be applied toward purchase of open space.
- Inlands/Wetlands: B. Conti reported:
  - 1) Brandywine – 40,000 ft expansion
  - 2) Litchfield Inn – tennis courts, rain garden, swimming pool and spa construction but no additional rooms
  - 3) Litchfield Housing Trust is looking at property on Litchfield Rd.
- 1) Park & Recreation: K. Carroll reported the outdoor movie night was a success – 100+ attended
- WPCA: R. Betar reported:
  - 1) Several public requests for *de minimus* flow status
  - 2) *New Important Information for Sewer Users* flyer was finalized and will be distributed to users with annual invoice.
  - 3) Public Works Director's Priority List of Items
- LABA: Doug Parker reported:
  - (1) Jonathan Derwin is doing a good job with the West Street business group.
  - (2) Thursday date night success
- Arts Council: Lee Losee reported Council established a scholarship; hoping for more applications before the September 9 deadline

- P&Z: M. Fishman reported approval of:
  - (1) Community Center expansion
  - (2) Litchfield Inn improvements and expansion of facilities (but not sleeping rooms)
  - (3) Application for accessory apartment before primary structure is built. Commission was divided but final decision was approved
  - (4) Electronic scoreboards
  
- LITCHFIELD TOWN WEBSITE  
More work to be done. Continue to monitor and make suggestions.

#### OLD BUSINESS

- Economic development is picking up in Bantam. Arethusa is a good neighbor.
- Doug Parker's EDC status changed from regular member to alternate member.
- Alexander VandenBerg's EDC status changed from alternate member to regular member.

#### NEW BUSINESS

D. Parker reported that a private group is funding and making progress on activating a Housatonic Railroad route from Kent, through Cornwall, Canaan, Pittsfield, MA and Brewster, NY to NYC. D. Parker will post a CD with details on the NWCT EDC site.

#### MEETING SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for [September 28, 2011](#) at the Litchfield Borough Hall on Russell Street at 7 pm.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Kay Carroll made a motion to adjourn; Mitchell Fishman seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Renée Betar, Acting Secretary  
Economic Development Commission