

LITCHFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

EDC Regular Meeting Minutes

June 30, 2021

Bantam Annex

80 Doyle Rd.

Bantam, CT 06750

Minutes (draft)

- 1) Meeting called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Cleve Fuessenich, Chair.
Present: Regular Members: Anne Haas, Cleve Fuessenich, Michele Murelli, Will Neary, Tom Roman and Lindsey Turner; Christine Harding-Abbott by telephone
Alternate Members: Renée Betar and Danielle Muecke
Ex-officio: Denise Raap, First Selectwoman, Litchfield
Absent: Alternate Member: DJ Murphy
- 2) Appointment of Alternate: none
- 3) Public Comment:
 - a. Burke Gibney: Interested resident - observing
 - b. Mike Kelly: Interested resident – observing
- 4) **Motion by W. Neary to approve draft minutes of the May 26, 2021 regular meeting; M. Murelli seconded the motion. Six members voted aye and A. Haas abstained due to absence; the motion carried.**

Motion by L. Turner to approve draft minutes of the June 16, 2021 special meeting; C. Fuessenich seconded the motion. Four members voted aye and W. Neary, M. Murelli and A. Haas abstained due to absence; the motion carried.
- 5) Update: Review recent changes in Litchfield that affect economic activity
 - a. W. Neary noted that the Farmer’s Alliance will not attend tonight’s EDC meeting but will circulate a revised draft of the Right-to-Farm Ordinance and will attend the July 28th EDC meeting.
 - b. C. Fuessenich visited with Syed Bokhari, owner of Litchfield Inn, who invited all EDC members to tour the Inn. The topic of a pool at the Inn was raised.
 - c. Espresso 59 is very close to opening.
 - d. Bantam Cinema non-profit group confirmed its plans to open in mid-September 2021. Applications for the Executive Director are being reviewed with a decision forthcoming very soon.
 - e. Congratulations to Arethusa Ice Cream (Bantam) for being voted best ice cream in CT by Food & Wine.
 - f. Parking and safety issues in Bantam are being monitored.
 - g. PS Gallery business and building on the Green were sold and another gallery will be moving in.
 - h. Possible B&B lodging in the former Rose Haven property is being reviewed by P&Z. The possibility of a small boutique hotel in the former Litchfield Court House is being discussed by the Litchfield Preservation Trust.
- 6) EDC task force updates
 - a. **Events:**
 - i. M. Murelli shared the BOS approved a resolution establishing the Litchfield Arts Council. See 7.a. below for details.
 - ii. M. Murelli’s non-profit is exploring a week-long Plein Air Festival and requested EDC

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support.

- iii. Top Dog Contest: EDC is presenting the Hot Dog Contest the week of July 15-21. See 6.c.ii for more details.

b. **Marketing and Branding Litchfield: L. Turner and W. Neary**

- i. The EDC marketing team hired a local web designer, [Dog and Pony Design](#) to start working on the Visit Litchfield CT website. L. Turner reminded members and residents to “like” and “share” the [Visit Litchfield CT](#) Facebook page.

c. **Tourism**

i. **Western CT Tourism District:**

1. Litchfield was chosen by Smithsonian Magazine (digital version) as one of the best 15 small CT towns to visit. T. Roman and D. Raap were thanked for providing details through the proper channels and “sealing the deal” to make this designation possible.
2. L. Turner contacted NPR CT’s Seasoned live food show, which happened to be featuring ice cream, to share the recent news that Arethusa Farm Dairy in Bantam was named best ice cream in CT by Food & Wine.

- ii. **National Days promo:** National Hot Dog Day is July 21. Several restaurants will be involved in the week-long Top Dog Contest. Volunteers are executing promotional plans. Will Neary is the EDC point of contact.

- iii. **Info Booth update:** Comment from visitor: Without Silly Sprout Toy Store, there is not much going on for kids on the Green. Booth staff agreed and also shared that the Historical Society is now open and providing events for children in town.

d. **LABA update:**

- i. D. Muecke shared that, as one of the volunteers who delivered LABA welcome bags to new residents, new home-owners were pleased and grateful.
- ii. Next monthly LABA meeting is Tuesday, July 20 at noon at the Litchfield Community Center.

e. **Small Business Forum:**

- i. The forum needs a new organizational structure since it should not continue as a municipal meeting. Possible solutions include:
 1. EDC could call a “Special Meeting” on the first Monday of each month.
 2. D. Raap suggested the possibility of having DJ Murphy/LABA take over running the monthly forum.
- ii. Details of the next forum meeting will be forthcoming.

7) **Old and Unfinished Business**

a. EDC facilitates organizing Merchants on the Green group:

- i. C. Harding-Abbott share responses to the Green merchant survey. The consensus so far is that a Green Merchant Association is needed to help address issues such as signage, parking, public bathrooms, and garbage.
- ii. Since several issues involve the Borough, R. Betar suggested that EDC assign a member to be a liaison to the Borough to initiate and address relevant conversations. D. Muecke volunteered to be the Borough liaison.

- b. Litchfield Arts Council update: M. Murelli shared the BOS approved a resolution establishing the Litchfield Arts Council. Interviews for council members will begin soon. Interested

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candidates for council members should contact M. Murelli.

8) New Business

- a. Consider applying for CT Historical District designation (like Ridgefield's Cultural District designation): EDC prefers to focus on other projects right now.
- b. Other new projects and initiatives:
 - i. R. Betar wants to re-visit promoting the film industry in Litchfield and will research current information from the CT Office of Film, TV and Digital Media.
 - ii. M. Murelli raised the topic of creating an area in Cobble Court where people could enjoy food and beverage at tables while artists could be actively painting on easels.
 - iii. T. Roman wants to explore what requirements are needed to have the Naugatuck Valley chocolate and wine train add a stop in E. Litchfield. Suggestions include:
 1. Contact Steve Casey at the New England Railroad Museum in Thomaston;
 2. Talk with Dan Morosani about current train developments;
 3. Explore details that the Berkshire Train Campaign might provide; and
 4. Talk with Colleen Kinkade (Litchfield Park and Rec) about coordinating town bus transportation and possible activities.
- c. EDC Election of officers for 2021-2022: C. Fuessenich explained how the elections worked and called for nominations from the floor:
 - i. Nominations for Chair:
 1. Lindsey Turner made a motion to nominate Will Neary as Chair; Michele Murelli seconded the motion; all voted aye and the motion carried.
 2. Tom Roman made a motion to nominate Cleve Fuessenich as Chair; Anne Haas seconded the motion; Cleve Fuessenich withdrew nomination.
 - ii. Nominations for Vice Chair:
 1. Michele Murelli made a motion to nominate Cleve Fuessenich as Vice Chair; Anne Haas seconded the motion; Cleve Fuessenich withdrew nomination.
 2. Will Neary made a motion to nominate Lindsey Turner as Vice Chair; Christine Harding-Abbott seconded the motion; all voted aye and the motion carried.
 - iii. Nominations for Secretary:
 1. Christine Harding-Abbott made motion to nominate Cleve Fuessenich as Secretary; Cleve Fuessenich declined.
 2. Lindsey Turner made motion to nominate Christine Harding-Abbott as Secretary; Michele Murelli seconded the motion; all voted aye and the motion carried.

Incoming officers were congratulated and outgoing officers were thanked.

9) Adjourn

Motion to adjourn meeting made by A. Haas; T. Roman seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 28, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Renée Betar

Secretary, Litchfield Economic Development Commission