



## LITCHFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes · **DRAFT**

March 30, 2022  
Bantam Annex  
80 Doyle Road  
Bantam, CT 06750

- Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Will Neary, Chair.

**PRESENT**      *Regular members:* Will Neary, Lindsey Turner, L. Cleveland  
Fuessenich, Michele Murelli, Thomas Roman, Danielle Muecke, Renee Betar  
*Alternate members:* D.J. Murphy, Tara-Marie Lynch, Lelah Campo  
*Members of the public:* Doug Clement, Susan Guletsky, Besty Paynter  
*Ex-officio:* Denise Raap, First Selectman, Litchfield

**ABSENT**      *Regular members:* N/A  
*Alternate members:* N/A

- Appointment of alternate voting member(s) for meeting: D.J. Murphy
- Public comment:
  - S. Guletsky, *The Discerning Palate*
    - Opening a new business and working with the town has been a positive experience so far in terms of getting permits, building inspection, etc.
    - Parking is tough (note that D. Clement, when posting blog posts for the town, makes a point to explain parking)
    - Also The Bakehouse and The Discerning Palate don't face North Street and, in the absence of a unit number, it's hard for people to locate the businesses
    - D. Raap mentioned:
      - When the old jail was turned commercial, they worked out a deal with Union Savings Bank for parking
      - Otherwise, parking spots are owned by state

- The town has parking signage (blue “P” circles) ready to go up; just awaiting approval from borough of Litchfield
  - Can’t hold parking for anybody (e.g., new hotels opening)
  - There is also a push from the town for owners of buildings and businesses to park in the back (right now many owners are parking in the front, which doesn’t free up space for customers)
- C. Fuessenich, *The Greater Litchfield Preservation Trust*
  - Former courthouse in Litchfield is in the process of being sold to Lexington Litchfield LLC where it would be converted into a boutique hotel
  - C. Fuessenich requests EDC endorsement of this plan
  - Originally, the property was offered as a gift to the town (which was passed on as it was deemed not suitable for municipal use)
  - Several studies have been done since, to determine what would make sense for the town, the viability of the property, traffic, etc. (to earn its keep)
  - Public hearing on May 2, 2022 @ 7pm with the Planning & Zoning Commission
  - In order to get tax credit from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the new version of the building / addition has to be distinct from the original building but also some elements of the courthouse must be preserved and protected in order to qualify, too, per the Historic District Commission and The Greater Litchfield Preservation Trust
  - The project also involves the National Park Service
  - Rooftop bar is in the plans (intended to be open to the public); a few people were concerned about the noise or potential onlooking to neighboring yards
  - How does the restaurant community feel about this? D. Raap explains that she, personally, invites competition because it brings vitality, promotes restaurant diversity, and helps all businesses.
  - The company, Salt Hotels, will invest \$10 million in this property and 13K square-foot building — they are known for a professional portfolio of high-end hotels in Nantucket, California, etc.
  - It hasn’t been a tax property to date; if this passes, it will be on the tax roll
  - D.J. Murphy mentioned this project is similar to Oliver Wolcott Library (a historical home with a post-modern addition; the community is proud of it)
  - T. Roman mentioned that “places to stay” (accommodations) are needed in Litchfield, so philosophically it seems like a project to embrace
  - EDC would like to know more about the project (e.g., drawings) before formally endorsing the project; C. Fuessenich will circulate relevant materials
- Motion by D.J. Murphy to approve draft minutes of the February 23, 2022 regular meeting; W. Neary seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

- EDC task force updates:
  - Marketing and Branding Litchfield (D. Clement, H. Tanguay):
    - Content outline for pamphlet design circulated
    - Pamphlet is not intended to be exhaustive in terms of listing *all businesses*
    - The goal is to drive traffic to the website
    - Initially, this will be funded via the grant
    - For reference, Washington went after big entities which would order X copies for themselves with their logo on it (for their specific print run); this is a sponsorship rather than advertising model, to help offset the costs
    - T. Lynch proposed printing the pamphlet in a custom size that stands out from the rest, up to including even making a branded holder for the copies to live and provide to businesses (so we can be separate from standard tri-fold racks)
  - D. Raap updated the EDC about the intention to distribute ARPA funding (\$30K/year, or \$120K over 4 years) for EDC efforts / general budget — instead of hiring a salaried person, since there is plenty of talent on the EDC together with external consultants
  - Opening a Business in Litchfield (D. Muecke):
    - Flowchart of steps to take in opening a business in Litchfield
    - D. Muecke is about halfway done with building aforementioned flowchart
    - Plan is to present the flowchart at the next EDC meeting
- Business Retention and Expansion Program (Betsy Paynter):
  - B. Paynter works with Council of Governments (COG)
  - Basis of a BRE program is to build stronger ties with businesses and goodwill among public and private entities in the community — “economic gardening”
  - Look at your Grand List, keep an inventory of all businesses (Excel spreadsheet or live document), devise a list of questions for them (how is your workforce, parking, plans to grow, necessities), follow up, determine if there are any common threads, request testimonials to post on the website, etc.
  - Could BRE potentially take the form of a subcommittee on the EDC?
  - B. Paynter explained how she, in the past (as Director of the EDC for Newtown), inserted a yellow slip about the EDC and its website into the routine town mailing for Personal Property Declaration; D. Raap mentioned the Personal Property Declaration mailing specific to Litchfield deploys in October
  - How can we get a hold of an exhaustive list of businesses in Litchfield?
    - C. Fuessenich has a list he’s been working on / codifying from a few years ago
    - D. Raap will ask Litchfield Town Assessor’s office for list of businesses
    - B. Paynter will request an export from the Discover Litchfield Hills map
  - T. Lynch — Can we build a list-serv with the business owners / operators?

- LABA (D.J. Murphy):
  - LABA continues to grow
  - 70+ people at Haight-Brown Vineyard
  - Bags were distributed for newest residents
  - Businesses are saying that they are getting new calls from new homeowners
  - Next event is April 19 @ 12pm at Keystone Place at Newbury Brook
- Western CT Tourism (T. Roman): N/A
- Litchfield as CT film hub (R. Betar):
  - Does the town and/or borough want to encourage residents and business owners to submit any photos that could potentially be used as fodder for filming sites?
  - [Film TV Digital Media](#): portal on CT website for submissions from towns, businesses, and residents offering their location(s) as a destination for potential film shoot(s)
  - L. Turner suggests potentially posting about this opportunity on social media (call-to-action being to encourage people to individually submit their residence or business); EDC and D. Raap were generally in favor of proceeding
- Old and unfinished business: N/A
- New business:
  - Connecticut Office of Tourism:
    - R. Betar noted that, during the most recent Northwestern Economic Development Commission meeting, it was announced that Noelle Stevenson (new Director of the Connecticut Office of Tourism) plans to visit Litchfield in May 2022
    - D. Raap to inquire about Stevenson's visit so EDC can prepare a curated itinerary of sorts for her; L. Turner volunteered to help with this
  - NWCT Arts Council grant (L. Turner):
    - \$150K in funding is available for creative partnerships
    - Focus is on: new artwork, free performances, classes, workshops, etc.
    - Ideally EDC could help facilitate and coordinate together with local nonprofits
    - L. Turner offered maybe a historical tour with Topsmead and Historical Society
    - C. Fuessenich recommends Robert Kwalick (Bantam Cinema & Arts Center)
    - D. Raap mentioned Kate Zullo gives tours of North Street, Litchfield Law School
    - W. Neary suggested maybe doing a workshop with kids at Guy Wolff Pottery
    - M. Murelli also mentioned plein air painting for kids (conflict of interest?)
    - D. Muecke proposed a walking tour of the Congregational Church, Tapping Reeve Law School, Litchfield Female Academy, etc.

- 2022 programs, events, budget:
  - D. Raap mentioned the EDC will have at least \$1K budget for next year
  - D. Raap is also pushing for more funds from ARPA for EDC efforts (as noted previously in the minutes)
- EDC membership:
  - W. Neary raised C. Harding's resignation and proposed T. Lynch be elected as a voting member; the next step following EDC's endorsement is for T. Lynch to resign as an alternate member with the intention of being appointed to a voting member status
  - EDC then discussed looking for a new alternate member (potentially someone with a unique skill set — e.g., legal background, from the healthcare field, etc.)
- Adjourn: Motion to adjourn meeting made by W. Neary; M. Murelli seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Next regular meeting is scheduled for April 27, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tara-Marie Lynch  
Litchfield Economic Development Commission

*Litchfield Economic Development Commission Mission Statement (adopted 06/10/2020):  
The mission is to promote sustainable economic diversity for Litchfield.*