



## LITCHFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Special Meeting Minutes · DRAFT

July 26, 2023  
Bantam Annex  
80 Doyle Road  
Bantam, CT 06750

- Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m. by L. Turner, Vice Chair.

PRESENT      *Regular members:* Tara-Marie Bares, Thomas Roman, Lindsey Turner,  
L. Cleveland Fuessenich, Michele Murelli (virtually)  
*Alternate members:* Renee Betar, Shellane Dyer, Missy Lafferty  
*Members of the public:* Jennifer Graham, Jessica Jenkins, Alice Ridgway  
*Ex-officio:* Denise Raap, First Selectman, Litchfield

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

- Appointment of alternate voting member(s) for meeting: M. Lafferty.
- Motion by R. Betar to approve draft minutes of the June 28, 2023 regular meeting with amendments; T. Bares seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.
- Third-Annual Top Dog Contest (T. Bares):
  - Record-breaking participation with 17 restaurants
  - Gooseboro was the 2023 winner
  - Tons of media coverage: WFSB, *The Hartford Courant*, WTIC 1080, CT Insider, Hearst, etc.
  - We had 1K+ votes for the top dog (last year we had 3K but that was set up differently with a rating system); both last year and this year allow for multiple votes
  - We also garnered roughly 200 new email sign-ups (new feature) and one winner was selected for Litchfield SWAG (lots of interest in this — to be discussed in future meeting)
  - Restaurants got involved on social media, appreciated table tents, etc.
  - After the contest is over, encourage restaurants in Litchfield to incorporate VLCT QR code on their menus

- 2.4K unique users to the Top Dog website
- 20K+ organic reach on social media posts
- Marketing and branding Litchfield:
  - Digital report (D. Clement):
    - Social media footprint is growing
    - Posts are reaching organic reach of 15-50K every month
    - Influencer partnerships (e.g., @theconnecticutedit)
  - “Welcome to Litchfield” signage (T. Bares):
    - T. Bares mocked up revisions and re-circulated
    - R. Alexe provided a large map to use to mark sites for proposed town sign locations (every location will fall under state property)
    - J. Graham reached out to Kay Carroll re: Litchfield Hills Farm Fresh sign (made by Write Way signs / approved by Planning and Zoning + Borough + Historic District)
    - T. Bares and J. Graham to present on September 7, 2023 before the Design Review Advisory Committee meeting
    - Sign stores in Torrington (Write Way and Giordano Signs) do not make wood signs anymore (metal or HD foam board)
    - Propose more sign locations than less (incorporate safety in the proposal)
      - 1) 63 + Forman Williams Drive (north of town)
      - 2) 202 + Ongley Road (west of town)
      - 3) 63 + Wolcott (south of town)
      - 4) 118 + Montfort (east of town)
      - 5) 202 by Rowe Funeral Home and Litchfield Veterinary Hospital
      - 6) Litchfield Green
  - Visit Litchfield CT guide (T. Bares, L. Turner):
    - Update PDF flyer
      - Farms
      - J. McLaughlin (new)
      - Blueprint CT (closed)
    - Sponsors and print runs
      - Litchfield Community Center @ 500 copies
      - Litchfield Distillery @ 1,000 copies
      - Litchfield Farmers Alliance / Chanticleer Acres @ 1,000 copies
      - Klemm Real Estate TBD
      - Litchfield Inn TBD
      - Brandywine TBD
      - Union Savings Bank TBD
      - *T. Bares to include sponsors in a list on the electronic version*
      - Consider plastic boxes to hold the guides
    - C. Paradise to present this opportunity to LABA?
    - R. Alexe recommends GIS system for tourism

- M. Murelli to collect print bids (3)
- Other topics (as time allows):
  - Northwest Hills Council of Governments (T. Bares)
    - T. Bares and D. Raap attended Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) charrette on July 12
    - Next round will be done with input collection virtually
    - Reported on “Discover Litchfield Hills” website and social media were launched as part of their last five-year plan and have since garnered an online following of 10K people and a monthly reach of 41K people + NWCT Food Hub has worked to connect 30 local farms
    - SWOT analyses
  - Litchfield Farmers Alliance (T. Bares)
    - “What’s Fresh in Litchfield” feature in the newsletter by D. Clement
    - More actively involve and feature farms via Amy Dyer and Barbara Putnam in VLCT
  - L. Turner made a motion to shift agenda items (swapping America250 for Naugatuck Railroad); M. Lafferty seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.
  - America250 (A. Ridgway):
    - Litchfield Patriots are convening a workshop on September 12 to kick off how to think about planning for the America250 campaign
    - EDC to promote America250 via VLCT — publish related events on the website calendar, compose a blog post, dedicated newsletter blast, social media posts, etc. (we can do a call to the community that this is happening)
    - A. Ridgway explained this event is a celebration, but also it’s a commemoration of the nation’s history and its meaning
    - J. Jenkins also made the recommendation to invite people to the Historical Society
  - Naugatuck Railroad (T. Roman):
    - Survey is complete
    - Submitted proposal to DOT (platforms and historical monuments)
  - Downtown photoshoot (T. Bares):
    - Major fashion brand conducted a shoot in the center of Litchfield
    - T. Bares spoke with the set producer (Maura Kane):
      - Reported local businesses were very accommodating
      - Entire process for getting permission was a breeze from the borough via Stephan Krucker
      - Creative team scouted several locations throughout CT and chose Litchfield as the most desired town for a film destination
      - Litchfield was the only town they used; all other locations were private residences in Washington, New Preston, etc.
- Strategic plan working group:
  - Endeavor to, as EDC, outline core mission, tentpole initiatives, budget, etc. for one-year, two-year, and three-year outlook

- Make this a single agenda item for a future meeting
- EDC nomination(s) / election of officers for 2023-2024:
  - L. Turner nominated T. Bares as Chair; M. Murelli seconded. M. Lafferty moved to close nominations for Chair; C. Fuessenich seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.
  - M. Lafferty nominated L. Turner to be Vice Chair; C. Fuessenich seconded. C. Fuessenich moved to close nominations for Vice Chair; M. Lafferty seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.
  - C. Fuessenich nominated M. Murelli to be Secretary; M. Lafferty seconded. T. Bares moved to close nominations for Secretary; T. Roman seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.
  - Shellane Dyer appointed to handle financial reporting.
- Adjourn: Motion to adjourn meeting made by L. Turner; M. Lafferty seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 30, 2023 at 5pm.

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.*