

**Economic Development Commission
Minutes
April 6, 2009**

Members Present: Joseph Mirra, Vice-Chairman
Tom Collette
Gary Fappiano
Jim Wolfe

Members Not Present: Richard Nunn, Chairman
Rosemarie Preneta

Others Present: Don Roe
Doreen DeSarro, Business Recruiter

Vice-Chairman Joe Mirra called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

1. **Approval of Minutes dated February 2, 2009** - Jim Wolfe made a motion to approve the February 2, 2009 minutes as drafted; Gary Fappiano seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.
2. **Review of Expenditure Report** - Don reported that staff has begun looking at possible underruns with the majority of the funds in the Promotional Expense line. Jim Wolfe asked if we had enough promotional pens, maps, etc.? Doreen DeSarro said we have enough pens but might be short on maps. She just committed some promotional funds to an additional ad in the New England Real Estate Journal; the ad will appear in the New Haven Spotlight section. Joe Mirra suggested buying more maps (with a new ad: "A Great Place to Locate Your Business") and distributing copies at Choate Rosemary Hall, Quinnipiac University and some hotels.
3. **Marketing/Staff Report – February and March** – Doreen DeSarro distributed and reviewed the reports for February and March. Don noted that the information in the February report concerning web hits was suspect; staff will need to review the stats for February.
4. **Update on Downtown** – Doreen distributed and reviewed the February/March report. It was reported that Tata's will hold a grand opening in April and Café Ra now plans to open in May. Five downtown businesses have signed on to participate in the BThrifty Program. Middletown merchants were pleased with the advertising they did with BThrifty and will consider doing another program during fall/winter. WCI is getting quotes for six parking banners for the parking lots on Center Street. Doreen also told members that Rick Myers left WCI to take another position in Bridgeport and Liz Landeau, a former board member, has accepted the position of Executive Director.

Jim Wolfe showed the Commissioners an article in the Hartford Business Journal comparing energy prices in the area. Jim noted that this chart does not reflect Wallingford's lower (than the State's average) rates. Don Roe said that CMEEC has been encouraged to advertise the low rates. Doreen DeSarro mentioned that our newest regional ad does talk about our low electric rates. Jim asked staff to look into correcting the erroneous information.

Jim Wolfe asked staff to make sure they contact him if they hear of any developments with the Workstage building; Doreen promised to contact him when anything definite happens.

5. Subcommittee Reports

- **P&Z Liasion** – Jim Wolfe reported that he attended the February PZC/TC workshop to offer EDC support of the Wallingford Incentive Housing Zone. The Meadow Street section was approved as drafted; however, the Core and North Cherry Street sections were tabled. Part of the concern for these areas had to do with possible displacement of residents. One suggestion was to move the railroad platform. The railroad still owns two lots by Parker Place and North Cherry Streets, which could negate the need to displace anyone. The next step for the Incentive Housing Zone is to send a letter to the Mayor; then the application goes to the State. There will be another meeting after the application comes back from the State. Wallingford was the first community to start this process. Six other communities are now working on their applications and people attending the discussion were told that the money will go quickly.

Jim also told the EDC that Joan Molloy has submitted an application to the PZC asking to change the I-5 regulations to add retail and restaurants uses to this zone. Jim Fitzsimmons said he was opposed to “destination retail” but would be in favor of allowing free-standing restaurants in that zone. Mr. Fitzsimmons does think there should be some changes to the regulations for the I-5 zone. Joan Molloy wants to come back before the EDC and then resubmit another application. The subcommittee wondered if it should be pro-active—should it work on developing a version of the I-5 regulations or should it wait and see what happens? Should the EDC put its position in writing? *Don Roe said staff will develop a draft of the EDC’s position and then bring that draft to the EDC for review.* Don also suggested that we notify Joan Molloy.

- **Retention/Incentives** – Gary Fappiano said the subcommittee met on March 12. They talked about lay-offs and also about getting companies together on an informal basis (perhaps like industries) to see if one or more can use by-products. The subcommittee is still working on the idea of informal meetings with companies. Members liked the idea and encouraged the subcommittee to keep working on this. Jim Wolfe said it might be better to have companies from different industries meet, rather than like. Joe Mirra suggesting contacting a few companies and talk to them about this idea to get their input. Doreen DeSarro said, according to Robin Wilson, the Lunch & Learn program through the Chamber didn’t worked out well, so that type of format would not work.
- **Marketing** – Tom Collette said the subcommittee discussed options for continuing promoting the Town. These include:
 - Advertising in the CCAED regional e-newsletter;
 - Participating in the BThrifty program. The pilot will be for the downtown but could be offered to the entire town at a later date. Doreen DeSarro asked the EDC, if this program goes forward, to keep track of how many times we see the ads.
 - Co-op advertising in the Record-Journal – the paper plans to give a break in rates to downtown businesses.
 - Advertising by closed circuit loop at the cinema at a cost of \$99/week plus a set-up charge.

Jim Wolfe asked about including the entire town. Tom said the subcommittee wants to start with a pilot program of the downtown and then expand it to businesses throughout the Town.

6. Regional Matters

- **Regional Growth Partnership** – Don Roe heard that the City of New Haven has rejoined this organization.
- **Quinnipiac Chamber of Commerce** – Don Roe thanked Jim Wolfe for coming to the Chamber rally and asked what he thought of it. Jim said he wasn’t sure that the rally will help; he is not

sure that it really affected the legislators. Tom Collette said he wished the event had been at lunchtime – perhaps more could have attended.

The Chamber is holding its Annual Meeting on June 4. Any member wishing to attend should so indicate to staff by the May 4 meeting.

Don Roe told the EDC about a Commuter Rail meeting on April 16 at 1 p.m.; interested parties may attend.

- **Workforce Alliance** – Joe Mirra said the organization is eligible for some economic stimulus money for on the job training; there are five (5) Wallingford candidates.
- **CCAED** – There will be a meeting in April.

Staff reminded EDC about the Expo on the 7th.

There being no further business, Jim Wolfe made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m.; Gary Fappiano seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Sincerely,

Lynn M. Wolff