

**Economic Development Commission
Minutes
June 1, 2009**

Members Present: Richard Nunn, Chairman
Joseph Mirra, Vice-Chairman
Tom Collette
Gary Fappiano
Mark Gingras
Rosemarie Preneta
Jim Wolfe

Others Present: Don Roe
Doreen DeSarro, Business Recruiter
John LeTourneau, Town Councilor

Chairman Dick Nunn called the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 6:32 p.m.; introductions were made to the new member, Mark Gingras.

- 1. Approval of Minutes dated May 4, 2009 – Jim Wolfe made a motion to approve the May 4, 2009 minutes as drafted; Rosemarie Preneta seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.**
- 2. Review of Expenditure Report** -- Don said an underrun of about \$1500 in promotional expenses is anticipated. Dick Nunn asked what happens to these funds. Don said any remaining funds stay in the General Fund. Mark Gingras asked who gets the salary in the EDC budget; Don answered that this salary belongs to Doreen DeSarro, the EDC Business Recruiter, who works part-time (19.5 hours/week).
- 3. Marketing/Staff Report – May** – Doreen DeSarro distributed and reviewed the report for May. She reminded the EDC about the CT Business Expo on Thursday, June 4 and urged Commissioners to attend, if their schedules would allow. Jim Wolfe asked about the Direct Contact in her report; Doreen said it was not major. Jim also asked if anyone had signed a lease for the Workstage building; Doreen said no leases have been signed yet.
- 4. Update on Downtown** – Doreen distributed and reviewed the May report. After her report, Dick Nunn asked how many vacancies are there currently in the downtown. Doreen and John LeTourneau estimated about five. Dick then asked about the number of commercial and industrial vacancies; Doreen did not know. Mark Gingras asked what was considered downtown; *Doreen said she would give Mark a copy of a map delineating the area, including a list of the current businesses.* Dick Nunn asked about the status of Café Ra; Rosemarie Preneta said she was given a tour and told the owner expects to open in September. The interior of the bank is being restored, which has delayed the opening. The Commission also discussed the BThrifty Program. Five (5) businesses are currently taking advantage of this advertising program. *Tom Collette asked if staff should contact the businesses to see if they have had any increased traffic as a result of the ads; Doreen said she will contact the businesses. Dick asked that Doreen send a memo to the EDC about the results of this advertising program.* The Commissioners were asked to watch for the commercials.

5. Subcommittee Reports

- **P&Z Liasion** – Jim Wolfe reported that he and Joe Mirra met to work on planning and zoning matters. Dick Nunn asked if the subcommittee had attended any Planning & Zoning Subcommittee meetings. Jim said they had not; none of the recent agendas seemed to contain items that would impact this Commission. The subcommittee has no plans to meet over the summer, unless staff indicates a need.

Doreen DeSarro asked Joe Mirra to report on the Verizon ribbon cutting he attended recently. Joe said Verizon has expanded its call center. The company has gone green and plans to add 30 employees to its customer service center. Workforce Alliance is working to help Verizon find these new employees.

- **Retention/Incentives** – Rosemarie Presenta said she met with staff on May 14. One of the items discussed was group business meetings. Gary Fappiano said he has broached the idea to a few businessmen who liked the idea of a breakfast meeting that was held before 8 a.m. Gary felt that organizing the meetings by type of business might be too difficult initially; he suggested trying to get 10-15 businesses to come to Town Hall for a breakfast meeting sometime this summer, September at the latest. Doreen DeSarro wondered if the summer might be a difficult time to get people to meet, given vacation schedules. Joe Mirra, along with others, felt that this is an unusual summer because of the economy—he agreed that a summer meeting might work. Tom Collette asked what the agenda will be. Gary said the companies would be sharing ideas for how to use unneeded items from another company. Jim Wolfe said many companies are also thinking about how to use items it already has in a new way. Doreen asked if we are going to concentrate on manufacturers. Gary said he felt the initial meeting should be open to anyone. Tom suggested that, at the meeting, a business card be collected from each attendee and a copy of all business cards be distributed by the meeting's end; this will allow businesses to contact someone after the meeting. The EDC discussed what to call these meetings; Jim Wolfe suggested "Business Exchange". It was agreed that the subcommittee needs to meet again to discuss this.

Rosemarie Preneta said the subcommittee also reviewed 25 new or expanding businesses and decided to send out 24 letters. Also discussed at the meeting were the incentive programs.

Dick Nunn reminded the EDC that three (3) days are being held (June 29, 30 and July 1) for company visits. The list of invitees was distributed so that members could identify which meeting they would like to attend.

- **Marketing** – Doreen DeSarro said the subcommittee had generated a list of marketing ideas several months ago and continued at its last meeting to review this list. It is anticipated that \$1,500 in Promotional funds is currently available, due to a national trade publication folding. Originally, the subcommittee had discussed doing advertising on the TVs in the local movie theater lobby; it was decided that this would not work well. Staff had two other suggestions: 1) agree to pay for ad space on the 2009 Mail-A-Map cover, as was done last year (cost - \$1,022); or 2) commit another \$1,000 toward the downtown merchant advertising in the Record-Journal. Members liked both ideas.

Gary Fappiano left the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

Tom Collette made a motion that the EDC purchase the ad on the cover of the Mail-A-Map and also commit \$500 toward more advertising through the Record-Journal to promote the downtown; Mark Gingras seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Joe Mirra asked if the line above the map could be changed to "Locate Your Business in Wallingford". Doreen will check on this.

6. Regional Matters

- **Regional Growth Partnership** – Don reported that Peter Stein is leaving RGP.
- **Quinnipiac Chamber of Commerce** – Don Roe, Tom Collette and Gary Fappiano plan to attend the Annual Meeting on June 4.
- **Workforce Alliance** – Joe Mirra said stimulus money has arrived and the organization is working on implementing the programs.
- **CCAED** – Doreen DeSarro said they had not met recently. MEDCO agreed to front the money needed for the quarterly e-newsletter. Meriden and Wallingford have committed funds but Cheshire, Southington and Berlin's share will be paid by MEDCO. Doreen asked the EDC to start collecting e-mail addresses of businessmen who might want this newsletter. Tom Collette said he will make an announcement at Rotary. Mark Gingras asked for background on this organization; Don Roe explained the history.

7. **Summer Meeting Schedule** – It was agreed that subcommittees and the full commission will only meet during the summer if needed.

There being no further business, Tom Collette made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m.; Jim Wolfe seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Sincerely,

Lynn M. Wolff