

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting of
April 25, 2007

PRESENT

Members: Vice-Chairman Kenneth Brannin, Kathy Alagno, John DePalma,
Robert Gregory, Bob Stanton

Press: Frank Juliano, CT Post and Chris Rhatigan, New Haven Register

I. Call to Order

Vice-Chairman Brannin called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of March 28, 2007 as distributed.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

III. Standing Reports

- A. Milford Chamber of Commerce – Ms. Alagno stated that the Chamber and Milford Progress are working on a signage study for the downtown area. They held two focus groups, one with the downtown merchants and one with the general public. The consultant who is actually doing the signage study rated the City of Milford (Poor) in people finding their way from the highway into the downtown areas. Wilbur Smith & Associates will have recommendations to present to the Board of Aldermen and Planning and Zoning. The Police Department and the Fire Department will also have input.
- B. Milford Progress, Inc. – Ms. Alagno said there will be one more additional focus group on May 24 at the Chamber office and will be offered to any City resident who would like to attend. Ms. Alagno also mentioned that Milford Progress voted to award the Devon Rotary Club the Milford Pride White Globe Award for their beautification of Liberty Rock Park.
- C. Downtown Milford Business Association – Ms. Alagno mentioned that the DMBA is working on a project now called “The Doors of Milford”. They are planning on having an auction for the doors and the money they raise will go to a charitable group called “The Hole in the Wall Gang”. The Captain Kid Treasure Hunt will also be coming back shortly.
- D. Real Estate Trends & Developments – No Report

E. Building Permit Task Force – No Report

IV. Devon, Downtown & General Economic Activity

Mr. Gregory reported the activity in the month of April as follows. All the major projects are ongoing. The mall is complete with their expansion. Milford Crossing is opening another business (Modell's) this weekend. The Golf Galaxy opened a couple of weeks ago. They expect to have most of the businesses up and running by June. Milford Marketplace is under construction as well as a lot of earth being moved at the Milford Jai Alai site. The developer at the former Gathering site will be eliminating the bank and will just have the CVS at that location, hopefully resolving the traffic problems.

V. Items & Matters of Continuing Interest

A. Devon Revitalization Program – Mr. Gregory stated that the Committee has hired Milone and MacBroom for the drainage study on Naugatuck Avenue. The Committee has also hired Milone and MacBroom for Phase III of the project and the contracts are being drawn up and signed.

B. Walnut Beach Redevelopment – No Report

C. Correspondence – Mr. Gregory pointed out the letters to Lisa Arenberg from the Mayor and from the Economic Development Commission commending her for years of service. There is no word on a replacement yet.

D. Proposed Courthouse Expansion/Milford Post Office/Downtown Parking Structure – No Report

E. Eisenhower Park – Mr. Stanton stated that there is no change. They have broken it down into stages. No new developments.

F. Reinstatement of Tolls – No Report

VI. Old Business - None

VII. New Business

A. Mr. Brannin revisited the retaining of business issue. Mr. Brannin said he would like to have a symposium at the Parsons Complex and invite U.I., a health insurance provider and a state representative or state senator. Ms. Alagno stated that the retaining business should be pointed more towards manufacturers and not retailers. Mr. Brannin pointed out that we still have a lot of manufacturers here in Milford. Ms. Alagno said that she, Mr. Gregory and Milford Progress could work on putting something together for a symposium and a panel discussion. Ms. Alagno said that there are four issues for business in Milford: health insurance, transportation, utility rates and taxes. Ms. Alagno stated that funding is always an issue.

B. Guest – Chief Keith Mello – Chief of the Milford Police Department

Chief Mello said he would like to explain how the growth in Milford has impacted the police department, the demand for police services, and how that impacts our residents who rely on the police department for services. Chief Mello compared Milford to West Haven because we are neighboring towns and of similar size.

Chief Mello continued by talking about the budget and overtime because that is how Milford pays for police officers for additional demands. West Haven's overtime budget is about \$900,000 and Milford's overtime budget combined is about \$450,000. Milford Police has 109 officers and West Haven has 119 officers. West Haven is putting in for more officers in the upcoming budget. Milford has grown and the Milford Police Department has stayed static. Chief Mello is concerned with the response time for the residents. This has an impact on the quality of life and the reputation of the Department.

There are greater expectations in law enforcement. The government and legislation has placed greater demands on Police Departments after 911. For instance, when the threat level is elevated it might not mean anything to most people, but it does matter to the police department because they have additional mandated responsibilities. Also after 911 policing has required unfunded training mandates. Each officer has to attend an additional 43 hours of a legislative training mandate which means each officer has to attend 60 hours every 3 years. Then there is your more routine, common practice type law enforcement responsibilities such as handling racial sensitivity, bias issues, liability issues, use of force issues and legal updates. This is approximately an additional 2,500 training hours. If they had to pay all of their officers overtime that would be over \$100,000 at today's rate.

Milford Center, Milford Harbor, all of the restaurants and bars, Silver Sands State Park, all of these growth areas in Milford, have stretched the Police Department thin. A bike officer is present within Milford Center area. They have also added motorcycles to their force. The Police Department tries to make an officer's presence in all of these areas to make the residents feel safe and indeed they are safer if there is a presence. They have a walk and talk program in place. The Police officer will park their cruiser and walk the areas of Milford.

With the increase of all these visitors comes traffic. There are approximately 4,130 vehicles on the Post Road at a peak hour. There are also 885 additional vehicles at the Mall at a peak hour. All of this points to the fact that all of these additional vehicles require traffic enforcement, traffic control and if a motor vehicle accident occurs this takes officers out of service for quite a bit of time. Traffic is a major concern. A discussion continued regarding the traffic issue.

The City of Milford has added 6.3 million square feet of retail and commercial space. All of these places like Milford Crossing, Milford Marketplace, Lowe's

and Westfield Mall are all additional areas that the Milford Police need to be. There are a lot of larceny complaints. It takes hours of officer's time to process these people. They added a substation in the Mall to help take care of the issues that arise with having this amount of retailers in the same area. They are in a prime location. A primary benefit to the substation is that the officers can process shoplifters, etc. right at the substation and it cuts down the time that the actual officer is unavailable to answer another call. Westfield Mall hires the Police officers directly and pays them directly on the weekend.

Chief Mello continued with saying that they have to deal with technology. The department now has computer forensics. The average forensic investigation takes about 40 hours. Last year they did up to 70 forensic cases. The department now has 1 full-time forensic investigator and 1 internet computer crime investigator. These people came from the regular detective bureau. Those are not additional police officers. As technology gets more sophisticated and modern law enforcement grows, the department needs to follow that lead and it takes more time, more training, more money, and more expertise. Chief Mello does not see the trend changing.

To end on a positive note, Chief Mello believes his people are doing a great job. The supervisors, managers and the men and women that investigate crimes who respond to calls for services they have done a fantastic job in meeting those demands.

Mr. Gregory stated that back years ago when he was at the Chamber there were 110 officers. Chief Mello stated that in 1981 they had 110 officers and now they have 109 officers. Ms. Alagno commented that the Police officers are stretched as far as they can go. Chief Mello pointed out that they are doing more with less. The final conclusion of the meeting was that the Milford Police Department needs additional officers. A discussion continued regarding putting cameras in specific areas for community safety.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m.