

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting of
August 27, 2008

PRESENT

Members: Chairman Robert Kapusta, Vice-Chairman John DePalma,
Robert Gregory, Cyrus Settineri, Bob Stanton, Peter Spalthoff

Guest: Lou D'Amato – D'Amato Brothers

Press: Noelle Frampton – CT Post
Brian McCready – New Haven Register

NOT PRESENT

Kathy Alagno, Ken Brannin, Tessa Marquis

I. Call to Order

Chairman Kapusta 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 July 23, 2008 as distributed.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Because of a previous commitment, the Chair asked the Commission if the guest speaker could be moved up on the agenda. The Commission agreed.

- VII. New Business – Guest Speaker** Lou D'Amato said that he and his brother have been builders in the City for 48 years. Chairman Kapusta mentioned that Mr. D'Amato is the 5th largest taxpayer in the City of Milford. His company has 235 tenants and 350,000 square feet of industrial space in the Milford area. With respect to local tenants, he stated that a third of them do not fit into any planning and zoning regulation category. For example a company that takes in meat in large quantities does not fit into regulations, therefore, they move to another town without the problems here in Milford. Mr. D'Amato insisted that these problems should be addressed and they need to find avenues to fix congestion. His main complaint is that Mr. Sulkis of the Planning & Zoning department follows the regulations too closely. There are instances when Mr. Sulkis should use more discretion regarding regulations. Mr. D'Amato also stated that some members are

against development and decisions made by the board and Mr. Sulkis have resulted in a loss of revenue for the City. Mr. D'Amato continued by saying the problem with following the regulations too closely is that the process becomes very expensive for the average person. He stated an example with a dog sitting operation that wants to occupy 4,000 square feet but it is not a permitted use. The process started out with Mr. Crabtree with an older survey description and ended up as a public hearing regarding urine as a problem. The first hearing entailed where the fence around the dogs would be. Mr. D'Amato stated that the second hearing attempt was around other issues and he believes that the board doesn't understand that they can get past some of these issues. The case is still pending and he believes this is totally outrageous and he believes could cost approximately \$10,000 by the time this whole process is completed. He believes that other departments are run properly and insists that P&Z could be running better. A discussion continued regarding the P&Z department and a possible committee to look at ways of making the department more business friendly.

III. Standing Reports

A. Milford Chamber of Commerce – No Report

B. Milford Progress, Inc. – Mr. DePalma stated that the meeting had a light agenda. They discussed signage and the next phase. Milford Progress set up a new committee headed by Lynda Smith. Ms. Alagno and Ms. Smith met with Bridgeport and Stratford to understand how they went about signage implementation. They called in all departments of the City for their input. Ms. Alagno and Ms. Smith believe that they should adopt that line of endeavor. They are going to schedule a meeting with the Mayor.

C. Downtown Milford Business Association – No Report

D. Real Estate Trends & Developments – Mr. Spalthoff commented that he believes Milford is continuing to hold its own. Everybody is taking a hit and real estate in general has seen the downside. Mr. Spalthoff continued by saying that he has always compared Milford to Stratford in the big picture. In 2007 Stratford sold 264 units compared to 189 units this year and that is about a 28% loss. The big thing that he sees is the loss in the value of homes that went from \$285,000 down to \$260,000, which is 9 to 10% down. Milford sold 268 units in 2007 and 187 units 2008, about 29% down. Sales from \$340,000 down to about \$318,000, a 6% price drop. On the coast, Guilford was down 30%, Madison was down 25% and Fairfield was down 35% and an 8% drop in dollar value. Milford continues to be affordable and a good place to be. A discussion

continued regarding properties on the water and their value and condominium sales.

- E. Building Permit Task Force – Mr. Settineri commented that he greatly appreciated the Mayor turning the Building Department issue over to Max Case the City Attorney and chose the right person for the job. The Mayor has also hired a consulting firm to review all departments but keying in on the Building Department. These are very positive steps and Mr. Settineri is extremely pleased with the progress. Mr. Settineri will speak with John O’Connell regarding the progress if needed.
- F. Stratford Liaison Report – Mr. Stanton stated that the Stratford Economic Commission’s meeting was cancelled for August. He did comment that he spoke with Bruce Alessie and discussed rationalization and what an absolutely great idea this is. In the overall scheme of things Stratford and Milford have more complete similarities than with Fairfield County. The idea of a development corporation would give them power to raise money, put some properties onto the tax roles and raise money by issuing bonds. A basic concern is that some income producing properties are not paying taxes.

IV. Devon, Downtown & General Economic Activity – Mr. Gregory stated that the activity for August is in the package.

This year a site selectors tour was organized by United Illuminating and included 17 towns in the area. Mr. Gregory continued by saying that it was a perfect day for the helicopter for an aerial view of the inland areas and also the waterfront. The site selector’s then boarded Mr. D’Amato’s boat and went from New Haven to Milford.

Mr. Gregory also mentioned that Milford Crossing won the NEDA Project of the Year award, a development of Ceruzzi Holdings.

The application has been filed for Aldi’s.

V. Items & Matters of Continuing Interest

- A. Devon Revitalization Program – Mr. Gregory said that the low bidder was G. Pic out of Bridgeport, the contractor on Phase II. This work should start in September. A meeting was held with DOT on August 26 and Senator Slossberg is moving the project forward.
- B. Walnut Beach Redevelopment – Mr. Gregory stated that they are waiting for legal review of the \$1M grant. Mr. Gregory is hopeful that the funds will be available in a month. The boardwalk monies are separate and they are already in place.

C. Correspondence – None

D. Proposed Courthouse Expansion/Milford Post Office/Downtown Parking Structure – Mr. Gregory stated that the courthouse expansion is in the hands of the State. \$600,000 has been allocated towards further development.

E. Welcome Letter to New Businesses – Mr. Gregory stated that there was one letter going out and others will be following.

F. Status of Signage Regulations – Wayfinding Signs – No Report

G. Available Business Sites – The CERC Sitefinder listing is included in the package.

H. Business Visitation Program – Mr. Gregory stated that the Business Visitation Program is completed and should be taken off of the Agenda for the next meeting.

VI. Old Business – None

The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna E. Holden