

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 27, 2006**

PRESENT

Members: Vice-Chairman Paul Austin, Ken Brannin, Robert Gregory *NV, and Wendy Weir

Press: Vin Moran, CT Post; Chris Rhatigan, NH Register

Guest: Dan Thomas, Assessor, City of Milford

COMMISSION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Kathy Alagno *NV, Lisa Arenberg, Peter Spalthoff, and Bob Stanton

*NV denotes non-voting member

Vice-Chairman Austin called the meeting to order at 12:19 p.m.

I. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of July 26, 2006 were approved as presented.

II. Standing Reports

- A. Milford Chamber of Commerce – No report.
- B. Milford Progress, Inc. – No report
- C. Downtown Milford Business Association – Mr. Gregory reported that plans for the Annual Lamplight Stroll were being made for December 8-10 as well as a “post stroll” at Stonebridge Restaurant. Additionally, the Milford Fine Arts Council will be having a boutique with characters dressed in Charles Dickens garb. Mr. Gregory also mentioned that Collected Stories is hosting a book signing for Mr. Dooling’s factual book about Charles Island on Thursday (October 28, 2006) evening.
- D. Real Estate Trends & Developments – Ms. Weir reported that interest rates are down substantially. She also said that since the 1st of September, there has been a bit of an upstart in the market, and that it seems to be more normal.
- E. Devon, Downtown & General Economic Activity – Mr. Gregory provided a report contained in the package.

Mr. Gregory has received favorable comments from various people regarding Devon's revitalization project. Mr. Austin commented that perhaps there should be more advertising of the Devon Dedicated Brick Program as some people had said to him that they had not been aware of it. Mr. Gregory replied that notices had been in the papers, and the newspapers had done a good job advertising the program. Ms. Weir suggested putting up signs advertising the bricks for future offerings.

Mr. Gregory pointed out the closings/openings of various downtown businesses in the report. Ms. Weir questioned if Quiznos' closing was due to any delays encountered with the city. Mr. Gregory replied that the problem had been with Quiznos' own corporate delays, rather than with the city.

Ms. Weir asked when the Silver Sands/Walnut Beach boardwalk was going to be done. Mr. Gregory replied that the State is responsible for hiring the design team. Once the team is selected, the design will take three to six months. However, prime beach time would be avoided. Construction would most likely be planned for spring or fall.

Ms. Weir asked who the architect was for the Stowe Farm project. Mr. Gregory replied that TLB Architects out of Chester had been selected.

Mr. Austin said that he had noticed after an event one evening the lack of lighting at the Devon Pavilion. Mr. Gregory said that he thought, perhaps, the city did not want lights installed because the area generally closes at dark.

- F. Sewer Commission Developments – Mr. Austin reported on the following commercial decisions:
1. The new owners of Café Atlantique, Charles Letizio and Antoinette Letizio, upgraded the classification to a class III and have been granted a six-month extension to install a grease trap.
 2. An application has been made to connect a proposed three lot residential sub-division to city sanitary sewer system by Steven Studer of Berchem, Moses, and Devlin, for 25 Lajoie Lane.
 3. Westcott and Mapes have recommended awarding the low bidder of Trumbull Construction (\$375,545) the sewer project infills for Holbrook Street and Lincoln Avenue.
 4. Carlin Contracting Company has been awarded the low bid (\$46,667,452) for the Housatonic and Beaver Brook Wastewater Treatment Plants project. The contract has been signed and forwarded to the City Attorney for final signatures by Purchasing.
 5. Application approved for a proposed 1st floor office/2nd floor one-bedroom apartment at 13 Lafayette Street.
 6. Application by Dr. Ragazza of 232 Boston Post Road approved to connect to city sanitary sewer.

7. Application for 183 Plains Road second story addition approved to connect to city sanitary sewer.

III. Items & Matters of Continuing Interest

- A. Jai Alai Disposition Status – Mr. Gregory reported that we continue to move along. The last approval to hear from will be the State Traffic Commission. Additionally, Toys R Us and Sunoco have yet to approve their easements. Mr. Gregory is cautiously optimistic that the deal will close by the end of this year.
- B. Walnut Beach Redevelopment – Ms. Weir said that the buildings are coming along. Things are looking much better now that several of the buildings have been framed. Mr. Gregory said that in addition to Milford having the longest boardwalk in the state, Milford might also be able to claim the shortest boardwalk. A short boardwalk is being designed leading to the beach at the end of Naugatuck Avenue and will be going out to bid soon.

Ms. Weir commented on the lack of trash receptacles at Gulf Beach. She has also observed where other cities provide receptacles for bottles, as well.
- C. Huffman Koos Site Status – Mr. Gregory reported that the demolition was pretty well completed.
- D. Correspondence – Mr. Austin brought to the Commission's attention a post card he had received regarding a conference with Thomas Freidman as the keynote speaker on October 6 at SCSU. Mr. Gregory said that he would be attending it. Mr. Gregory also pointed out the inclusion of the letter regarding 989/975 Boston Post Road in the package.
- E. Proposed Downtown Historical District – No report.
- F. Proposed Courthouse Expansion/Milford Post Office – No report.
- G. Downtown Parking Structure – No report.
- H. Eisenhower Park – It was noted that the Mayor has proposed buying property next to the YMCA for playing fields, which will allow the gardeners to stay in their current location.

IV. Old Business

There was no old business.

V. New Business

Mr. Austin introduced Dan Thomas, Assessor for Milford, as the guest speaker. He said that Mr. Thomas had been here as guest speaker two years ago, and now he was back to bring everyone up to date.

Mr. Thomas began by saying that the amount of construction in Milford was amazing. The high number of building permits is a direct reflection of the amount of construction activity in Milford. The economy in Milford is vibrant.

He stated that actual sales prices have not changed dramatically in the past year, which points to the fact that we are entering a soft market. Mr. Thomas also noted that commercial properties are keeping pace with residential properties, which will lessen the impact on residents. Waterfront properties do, however, bear the brunt of increases in taxes due to their rising value.

Mr. Gregory asked if there was a better way to adjust evaluations. He questioned whether or not doing the re-vals every year, rather than doing them every four to five years, could soften the effect. Mr. Thomas replied that would be an ineffective way to do them. The city gets few, if any, challenges on assessments because four to five years is a more stable way of evaluating property and creating the city budget.

Mr. Gregory said that the city made the decision years ago to do evaluations "in-house." Mr. Thomas agreed that this makes good sense because the Assessors Department is more focused and knowledgeable about the city's market than an outside source would be.

Mr. Gregory asked when would the re-vals be out. Mr. Thomas said they would be in the mail by October end.

Mr. Austin asked if additional staff was needed for doing the re-vals. Mr. Thomas said yes, they had to take on additional staff, especially as the assessments were done "in-house." He further stated that letters would be going out in three years to confirm property information. Mr. Thomas also confirmed that the law mandates assessments be done at least every five years. If this were not complied with, state funds would be withheld.

V. Other Business

With no other business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Eisler, Recording Secretary