

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Minutes of the meeting of
January 24, 2007

PRESENT

Members: Chairman Robert Kapusta, Vice-Chairman Ken Brannin, Robert Gregory, Kathy Alagno, John DePalma, Cyrus Settineri, Peter Spalthoff, and Bob Stanton

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

Guest: Ray Swift, Operations Manager, Lisman Landing at the Head of the Harbor

Chairman Kapusta called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

I. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Election of Officers – Robert Kapusta was nominated to serve as Chairman for 2007. Since there were no other nominations, a motion was made and seconded to have the secretary cast one ballot for Mr. Kapusta. Ken Brannin was nominated as Vice Chairman. Since there were no other nominations, a motion was made and seconded to have the secretary cast one ballot for Mr. Brannin.

A motion was made to send thank you and commendation letters to Paul Austin and Wendy Weir.

Mr. Kapusta welcomed new members Cyrus Settineri and John DePalma.

II. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of November 29, 2006 as distributed.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

III. Standing Reports

- A. Milford Chamber of Commerce – Ms. Alagno said that the Chamber is in the planning phase for the year. The Annual Meeting is coming up on January 31st with the Speaker of the House, Jim Amann, who will address the business community on activity in the legislation session. The key issues that they are looking at are energy and a universal health care program to cover all children. The Chamber also will be giving out

community awards to 10 different people. The Milford Chamber of Commerce has 802 members. Ms. Alagno stated that 25% of the Chamber's memberships are from outside of Milford. The Milford Chamber is considered a medium size Chamber.

- B. Milford Progress, Inc. – Ms. Alagno stated that there was a Milford Progress (MPI) meeting on January 23 and they met with Wilbur Smith Associates, (WSA), the consultant for the sign study. WSA representatives explained the scope of work to MPI. They have already been out and around the City looking at the signage. They are finding examples of appropriate signage and signage that needs improvement and WSA will also make recommendations for changes in the regulations.

MPI will be holding a public informational meeting possibly in March. MPI will be asking the residents of Milford to come in and talk with them about the look that the residents would like to see in the Downtown area. WSA then will come in and give their recommendations. Mr. DePalma recommended that the theme for the Downtown area be based on pride not enforcement. There might be some incentives for businesses to get involved. Mr. Settineri offered a marketing idea of a contest which would consist of pictures before and after for when this project is completed.

- C. Downtown Milford Business Association – Ms. Alagno said that the Lamplight Stroll at Christmas was a huge success.
- D. Real Estate Trends & Developments – Mr. Spalthoff reported that the rates are going up and the economy is flat. Real estate is seeing a slow down in the industry about 100 homes off on the sales from 2005 to 2006 but still about 20,000 over on what they were selling them for. The biggest boom for Milford real estate isn't that they have done anything right, it's just that they have caught up to everyone else. There are 27 houses that are on the market for \$1M in Milford. Mr. Spalthoff said you just can't replace waterfront property.

IV. Devon, Downtown & General Economic Activity

Mr. Gregory said that Barnes & Noble and Staples opened at Milford Crossing and the construction is continuing. The former Bic property is starting to lease out. Mr. Spalthoff asked about Harrison's. Mr. Stanton explained that it is a very complicated situation.

V. Items & Matters of Continuing Interest

- A. Jai Alai Disposition Status – Mr. Gregory stated that the best news was that the City closed on the Jai Alai property just before Christmas. Ceruzzi has already started taking Milford Jai Alai down and it will be replaced with a Lowe's Home Improvement Center as the main business. A Hilton Garden Inn, a couple of new restaurants and a bank are scheduled to be going on

the site as well. The final piece that put this deal together was the approval from the State Traffic Commission. Mr. Gregory said that this was a great “win win” situation for the City of Milford. The Mayor stated at a press conference that we ended up with a plus of a little less than \$1 million.

Mr. Gregory said that Hyatt Place is opening up on the other side of the street but there are some properties that could stand to be improved. Gabrielle is the new owner at the truck sales operation and they also have already purchased a piece of the Jai Alai property from Cerruzzi for expansion of their business.

Mr. DePalma mentioned that Stratford is working on putting an exit on Ferry Street so one would be able to get into Devon a lot quicker. Mr. Gregory said that Speaker Amann is opposed to the exit. Gregory also said that he did not see a proposal for an exit from DOT. There are both pro and con opinions in Stratford.

- B. Devon Revitalization Program – Mr. Gregory stated that the sidewalk project on Naugatuck Avenue is complete. The engineer from DECD who inspects sidewalks all over the State said that it is one of the “best sidewalks in the State”. The sidewalk has diamond patterns with four scenes from Old Devon and the memorial bricks are sold around those diamonds. There is a grant in process for \$2.5 Million to continue the sidewalk streetscape. Discussion continues on burying the utility wires and the Devon Revitalization Committee is expected to make a decision at the next meeting.

Mr. Gregory said that there is a continual problem of flooding on Naugatuck Avenue and it impacts the businesses and St. Ann’s Church in particular. The Commission is looking at a drainage study that will come up with a solution which would then have to be bonded. The problem has gotten worse in the last three years. There is also an ongoing parking study to determine where there would be better and additional parking. The third study would be a signage study.

- C. Walnut Beach Redevelopment – Mr. Gregory mentioned that they are continuing working on Stowe Farm. The architect is narrowing in on the final design for Stowe Farm which would be a part of the Fine Arts Council operation. The Center for the Arts downtown will be more for the performing arts. The Stowe Farm will be more for the visual arts but there will be some crossover between both. Mr. Gregory also said that Walnut Beach Redevelopment is looking toward improving the beach access at the end of Naugatuck Avenue and Stowe Avenue to provide better access.
- D. Correspondence – Mr. Kapusta mentioned the letters from the Mayor to Paul Austin and Wendy Weir.
- E. Proposed Downtown Historical District – Mr. Stanton stated that the district will be operated as a separate district from the current one with a different

commission operating it. This has not been reviewed by the Board of Alderman as of this date. There is no opposition and no commercial businesses in the approved district.

- F. Downtown Parking Structure – Mr. Kapusta has heard nothing further. They are waiting for the State Public Works Department to coordinate with the State Judicial Department.
- G. Eisenhower Park – Mr. Gregory said that on January 23 the Eisenhower Park Committee presented a final plan in a series of three phases. The first phase is strictly environmental work. The second phase is improving and upgrading the existing facilities. The third phase is more intense development adding features that would raise revenue to support Eisenhower Park.

VI. Old Business - None

VII. New Business

- A. Harbor Dredging - Mr. Kapusta asked Mr. DePalma if he has heard anything new about the dredging problem for the Harbor. Mr. Kapusta read a letter regarding the Harbor dredging. A motion was made and seconded that the EDC endorse and support the Mayor's dredging program.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

- B. Building Department - Mr. Settineri has been hearing reports about the Building Department and the huge delays they put on everything. He wanted to know if the Commission could start a Task Force and to send out a questionnaire to see what is hindering the projects in Milford.

Mr. Settineri made a motion to research and investigate the activities of the Building Department to analyze whether it is operating the best way for the City. The motion was seconded by Mr. Brannin.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Mr. Settineri and Mr. Spalthoff will serve on the Task Force.

- C. Guest – Ray Swift, Operations Manager, Lisman Landing

Mr. Ray Swift started by saying that he and his wife and three children live in Devon. His wife is a school teacher in Milford. Mr. Swift graduated from the University of New Haven with a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice. He was a Milford police officer for 21 years. Mr. Swift is the successor to Dick Hosking at Lisman Landing.

Mr. Kapusta inquired about the revenue for the operation. Mr. Swift said it comes from the slips, transient fees and ramp stickers. The majority of the funds come from the mooring fields. There are 120 in the harbor and 70 in the Housatonic River. The projected revenue for this year is about \$365,000. The operation is weather-dependent. There is a lot of people that come from Long Island just to come for dinner. A discussion ensued regarding fees, cost of gas and how much to charge per foot as a docking fee.

Mr. Swift said that 1,356 boats spent the night, 509 from New York and 137 from New Jersey. Most people that visit Milford walk to the center of town and go shopping or go to the restaurants. Ms. Alagno said that she would like to send out brochures to people that come into the dock. Mr. Settineri sparked a conversation about vendors like food stands or possible kiosks for the summer months. Mr. Swift said his main goal is to get the Landing in the black first.

Mr. Swift spoke about the dredging of the harbor. A consultant has been hired to figure out what to do with the dredge materials. They would like to put it on Gulf Beach. The City of Milford is going to pick up the tab on the dredging. The dredging was last done in 1999. This is a maintenance issue. The Landing would like to get this done between April 15 and June 1. The chemical analysis of the dredged material is in but results unknown as of today. This is an emergency dredging project.

Milford Landing is a marina but it's 80% park. The Committee is trying to come up with different ways to make things more attractive to people that come into Milford. Every boater who comes into Milford Landing gets a "blue bag" that has coupons and information, etc.

VIII. Other Business – None

The meeting was adjourned at 1:27 p.m.