

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Meeting of July 23, 2014

Present: Commissioners: Robert Kapusta, Chairman, Suzanne Cahill, John DePalma, and Victor Ferrante

Advisors: Julie Nash & Kathy Alagno

Absent: Greg Harla, Michael Lynch & John O'Neil

Senator Slossberg's Assistants: Mike Vansambeck & Timothy Wolf

Press: Pam McLoughlin – New Haven Register

Public: Joe Agro

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** - Chair Kapusta called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m.
- II. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES** – A motion was made by John DePalma and seconded by Suzanne Cahill to approve the minutes of June 25 as presented.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

- III. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** – Chair Kapusta commented that he met with the Mayor briefly and the Mayor has spent a lot of his time working with John O'Neil on the signage. Some of these signs have been posted on High Street and Broad Street with the Mayor's design. The signs are blue and have a picture of a sailboat on them and this will be the trademark of all of the other signs displayed. Chris Saley of Public Works has been working closing the John O'Neil and the Mayor.
- IV. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** – Joe Agro stated that Julie Nash and the Mayor have been in discussions with him regarding the downtown parking situation. Mr. Agro's piece of property, in the center of town, has been looked at to resolve some of the parking issues. Mr. Agro reviewed a map of Daniel Street and the other parcels of property in the area. The larger parcel of property is Richie Conine's Restaurant, The Stonebridge, the book store, the barber shop, and down to the Bratwurst place. Across the street is Café Atlantique and it runs up through Subway and back down to Eli's. The entire parcel is 1.6 acres for the entire block. Mr. Agro's property is kiddy corner on the other side of the railroad track and is the same size piece of property. For valuation purposes, the property is not infringed by the railroad,

there are no easements on the property, they don't have any wetlands and the property is not in the floodplain. Mr. Agro gave the plans to the Appraiser a couple of weeks ago. Mr. Agro also stated that he has come up with a dozen different layouts throughout the years for possible concepts for the property. The total square footage of all of the buildings that are in this area is 45,000 square feet of space and the area has 35 to 40 parking spots. Mr. Agro stated that he has plans that range from 83,000 square feet on his site with up to 225 parking spots because it can be organized to use the whole site. There are four different plans that Mr. Agro shared with the committee. He suggested that no matter what the City or the committee does that a short term approach is not recommended. A discussion continued on the four different plans for consideration.

V. CORRESPONDENCE – None

VI. GUEST SPEAKER – SENATOR GAYLE SLOSSBERG – Chair Kapusta introduced the guest speaker Senator Gayle Slossberg. He stated that Senator Slossberg is completing her 10th year representing the 14th District which covers the residents of Milford, Orange, West Haven and Woodbridge. She earned her Bachelor of Science Degree from Cornell University and a law degree from New York University Law School. Senator Slossberg continued by saying that her experience in Economic Development and business began at a young age and a lot of hands on experience. She grew up in a family business that was started by her grandfather at the turn of the century in Boston, MA and it was a wholesale/retail leather business. Her father continued running the business on South Street in Boston and would take her to work with him on the weekends and would have her stand on a box behind the counter and sell items in the shop. The most important job she had when she was seven was to go through the neighborhood and go into every competitor and compare everyone's prices with her father's shop. She learned rapidly what it meant to be in a neighborhood with other businesses, how the synergy works, what it meant to be competitive, what it meant to meet payroll and the costs associated with running a business and when the community support is no longer there you need to relocate your business. She brings her experience to Hartford when it comes to addressing the most important item which is jobs and getting the economic engine going.

Senator Slossberg stated that four years ago we had the largest state deficit the state has ever seen and it was \$3.7 billion. The deficit has been down since then. The last biennial cycle the state had a \$2.2 billion deficit going in, which is less than the \$3.7 billion. The state ended up this fiscal year with a surplus of \$122 million. Connecticut's unemployment rate is down to 6.7%. The U.S.

unemployment rate is at 6.1%. The peak rate was at 9.5% in 2010. The state debt is down. A discussion continued regarding previous state debts and bonding issues at the county and state levels. The Senator commented that the state has increased the investment in education at all levels across the state, which is one of the best accomplishments within the state in the last couple of years. The state has made huge investments in pre-school education and universal pre-school slots. The state has increased funding to the local communities and this means less of a necessity for property taxes to go up. In fiscal year 2014, the City of Milford will be receiving \$15,097,000 in local funding and in fiscal year 2015 it rises to \$15,327,000. The state has made major investments to community colleges and state universities. They have made a commitment to \$175,000,000 additional to go to the state universities and \$1,500,000 to go to UCONN and these are over a period of time payments not a lump sum. The main objective in Connecticut is to achieve high paying jobs with good benefits for all students in the state. Senator Slossberg stated that she is a true believer that the way our economy and our state and country are going to move forward is the same old way we have always done it with good old Yankee ingenuity and innovation to get the economic engine moving.

Chair Kapusta inquired about the Veterans Affairs publicity across the country and as it pertains to the West Haven VA. Senator Slossberg is the Vice Chair of this committee and she stated that thankfully the VA in West Haven is much better compared to the rest of the country. She has spoken with the veterans who actually go to the VA and they are extremely pleased with the quality of care. Chair Kapusta stated that he believes that the West Haven VA is far superior to any other VA in the country and the Senator agreed.

The Senator continued saying that there is a lot of discussion about job creation and the numbers and what we really have here in our state. The private sector non-farm job growth is up 5,300 positions. These jobs are not government, not farm, and not seasonal positions. These are solid positions with new job growth and this is the first time this has been seen in the state in about 25 years. The labor force numbers have continued to increase for the last six months. It is still lower than the peak. A discussion continued regarding the loss and gain of jobs through the recession and the moving in and moving out number in the state. The trends are moving in the right direction. Senator Slossberg also stated for the first time that there is an agreement between UTC and the State of Connecticut and they have committed to stay in the state and it does not cost the state anything. UTC has made a commitment to spend \$500,000,000 and then \$4 billion on their infrastructure to make the long-term commitment that

the State of Connecticut will be UTC's home. We have 744 employees in Milford that work at UTC. There are 62 feeder businesses that rely on UTC. This commitment is important for the long-term and economic health of Milford's business community, Milford's tax base, and Milford's citizens. Senator Slossberg thanked all of the commissioners for their service on the commission, their public service and leadership and commended Robert Kapusta as the Chair of the commission.

VII. STANDING ITEMS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. DOWNTOWN PARKING & LIAISON TO P&Z BOARD – No Report.
- B. CHAMBER – Kathy Alagno listed the current activities from now until the end of the year - another restaurant week which will take place starting the week of October 6. There will also be a health and wellness expo at the Westfield Mall in October with 80 to 90 vendors. The chamber health and wellness committee will be running a Milford fun and fitness day at Eisenhower Park in the beginning of September. Gym Runny will also be another event for fitness. It is all about making Milford healthy.
- C. 375TH ANNIVERSARY OF MILFORD/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY – Julie Nash commented that the 375th committee has two events coming up. The first one is the movie night at Walnut Beach on August 21 and the other is the Veterans weekend. They have reached out to the Connecticut Food Bank to see if they will partner with the 375th for the day and bring a food truck and collect and deliver the meals to veterans in the area for Thanksgiving. Ms. Nash asked for ideas from the committee for that weekend. The 375th committee will be doing fireworks at Lisman Landing and food trucks will be a part and they will be asked the restaurants to get involved as well.

Julie Nash continued saying that there have been a few businesses that have opened up and Fruit Occasions has invited everyone to their business opening on July 26. The Downtown Wine Trail is scheduled for September 13. Representative Rose announced a program that she is working with businesses in the area to offer discounts on store items to Veterans. It is called Milford Welcome's Veterans Program. Ms. Nash welcomed the commission to lend a hand and if anyone is interested to give Rep. Rose a call. Ms. Nash stated that there have been two approvals in a two week timeframe. The Dept. of Transportation has approved the train trestle improvements. Milford is the first town in Connecticut to do this program. Paige Miglio is doing a call to artists. Paige and

Julie are meeting with DOT to get their requirements before they move forward. They also received approval for the Kiosk on the train platform. At the City's expense there will be vinyl pictures of Milford put up on the platform.

D. PERMIT & LAND USE PROCESS REPORT – No Report.

E. VISITATION REPORT – No Visitation. Mr. DePalma stated that Bob Stanton brought this to John's attention that the Milford Mall sales are being taken away from the big stores because of the Internet. Chair Kapusta stated that JC Penney has been closed in the Meriden Mall. Mr. DePalma believes this chain of events will increase the small business sales.

F. TOURISM – Suzanne Cahill spoke with the Mayor to possibly set up a sister cities program and Suzanne met with the Consulate General for the U.N. for India to talk about this with larger delegations. Ms. Nash stated that the CT Fan Favorite is still going on and asked for everyone to vote.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS – None

IX. NEW BUSINESS – None

X. FOR THE GOOD OF THE CITY – Chair Kapusta commended Senator Slossberg for staying for the entire EDC meeting and he wanted to thank her and state for the record that she shows she is truly interested in the City of Milford.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m. A motion was unanimously carried to end the meeting by Victor Ferrante and seconded by Suzanne Cahill.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna E. Holden