

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of**  
**August 22, 2007**

**PRESENT**

Members: Chairman Robert Kapusta, Vice Chairman Kenneth Brannin,  
Kathy Alagno, John DePalma, Robert Gregory, Cyrus Settineri,  
Bob Stanton

Guest: Dr. Harvey Polansky – Superintendent of Schools

Press: Bill MacDonald, CT Post and Brian McCready, New Haven Register

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Kapusta called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of July 25, 2007 as distributed.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

**IV. Standing Reports**

- A. Milford Chamber of Commerce – Ms. Alagno stated that the Chamber is in the process of interviewing a couple of consultants to work with the Chamber on doing a strategic plan for the next 18 to 24 months. In addition, the Chamber is trying to put together a Board retreat. Ms. Alagno continued by saying that many of the members on the Chamber Board are relatively new and they want to pull everyone together to get a common consensus to keep people going in the same direction.
- B. Milford Progress, Inc. – Ms. Alagno stated that they are in the process of reviewing the draft of the signed regulations that was presented to Milford Progress by Wilbur Smith. The City Planner and City Attorney are reviewing the draft regulations. Mr. DePalma stated that the report was very well done and very comprehensive and they are trying to hammer out some of the changes and some of the wording. Mr. DePalma was impressed with the presentation.

- C. Downtown Milford Business Association – Ms. Alagno stated that DMBA has become extremely active in the last year or two. They were involved in the Milford Oyster Festival’s pearl trail and this event turned out to be an incredible success for them on Friday night.

\*(Dr. Harvey Polansky arrived at 12:10 p.m. and made his presentation after Item IV C)

### **III. Guest Speaker**

Dr. Harvey Polansky, Superintendent of Schools, began by saying that he grew up in New York City in a little town called Brooklyn. He went through the New York City public school system. He attended the City College of New York and from there he went to UConn for his PHD.

Dr. Polansky became Assistant Principal and Principal in Coventry, Connecticut. He worked in Stamford as Grants Director and also did some budget work. He worked with the magnet school programs when they were started, flying to Washington regularly.

After working in Stamford, he became the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction in East Lyme, CT and was Superintendent in Southington for the past seven plus years. While he was in Southington he worked with the Chamber of Commerce. He worked with Lou Perillo in Economic Development.

Dr. Polansky stated that the more economic development there is the more of a tax base there is and that takes a burden off of the residents. He stated that he has always been active in community affairs. In Southington he was the campaign chair of the United Way for a year and also on the Boards of the Chamber of Commerce, United Way and the YMCA. Dr. Polansky is a die-hard Yankee and Uconn fan.

Dr. Polansky continued by saying that in terms of his values it all consists of student learning and student achievement. His focus is that teachers should make sure that the students are doing the work and that a classroom in 2007 is very different from when he went to school. All the research shows that we used to watch the teacher in the classroom and now the focus is on the student and taking responsibility for his learning. The children are taking high stakes exams every year. “No Child Left Behind” has expectations that everyone will get a 100% on the exam by 2014. Dr. Polansky does not believe that this is a realistic goal. The expectation of this program is that special ed students will achieve at the same level as regular ed students and children who don’t speak English will take the exam in English. Polansky believes that there needs to be improvements in the law.

Dr. Polansky believes that Connecticut has the best assessment system in America called the CT Mastery Test and CT Academic Performance

Test. These tests measure the standards and the frameworks that are required. The State requires that about 70% of the children hit proficiency every year and then it goes up 2 or 4% every year and then it works its way up to 100% by 2014. The test measures good skills. The program, No Child Left Behind, is all about adequate yearly progress. Over 90% of the students hit their proficiency. Milford students were very competitive within their comparable districts. A discussion continued regarding how students are evaluated and the improvements that need to be put in place with these laws. Dr. Polansky does not believe in a full year school system. He also does not believe the high schools should be merged. Dr. Polansky also believes that he should make sure good teaching is happening and use technology to enhance what's happening and not to supplement what's happening. The children need to know how to go onto the internet and find the information.

There is an epidemic of students not reading. The children are on too many game boys, etc. Dr. Polansky is part of the CT Center of School Change. There are about 17 superintendents that meet monthly at Harvard University with Dick Elmore. This group has come to the realization that at the core of all successful schools is literacy. If a child can't read he is not going to do well. Dr. Polansky believes the key for all learning is literacy. The lost generation missed the point. The point is that the home environment has not set in place that there is a time for homework and a time for doing other things. There are core values that everyone needs to maintain in the educational environment. Dr. Polansky believes the teachers make commitments and their attendance is fairly good. The teachers are dedicated and they work every day with a cross section of children. The teachers are very strong in their content area. Dr. Polansky believes if you do enough professional development and training you will not have teachers who are deficient in the content area.

D. Real Estate Trends & Developments – None

- E. Building Permit Task Force – Mr. Settineri stated that he was impressed with the Mayor's steps. Some have been implemented. He has not heard a lot of results. He heard of one incident that was a problem. Mr. Settineri is planning in another month to meet again with the contractors and builders to get some updates. Mr. Settineri also believes that this situation requires some additional attention. He thinks within a month if they receive some positive reports then this will be a successful effort and if they don't they will continue to work with the situation. Mr. Gregory stated that they have hired a new building inspector.

**V. Devon, Downtown & General Economic Activity**

Mr. Gregory stated that Walmart has opened. They gave \$28,000 to a whole list of organizations. They are going to have 320 employees. Things are

progressing at the Jai Alai site and Pilgrim Furniture is going to go in the old Kurt Volk building on the Post Road, which has been empty for the last 10 to 15 years. They are going to completely renovate the building. At Milford Marketplace, Cold Water Creek is already looking for people. Wild Oats has been bought out by Whole Foods so now it's one big healthy supermarket.

When asked how downtown Milford would fare with all this retail development he said that there is an entirely different experience downtown and they should do very well. Ms. Alagno also stated that a new shop opened called Splurge Denim for women.

The Site Selector's Tour starts today, August 22. They have a cocktail party in New Haven and dinner at Union League Café. On August 23 they have breakfast at the West Haven Conference Center and then a helicopter tour of the sites. In the afternoon they will be going on Louis D'Amato's yacht. Mr. Gregory and Mr. Bergami will be crewing and they will pick the site selectors up at Long Wharf and cruise them along the shore and then bring them into Lisman Landing where the Mayor will be meeting them. At night they will be going to the Pilot Pen Tennis.

## **VI. Items & Matters of Continuing Interest**

- A. Devon Revitalization Program – Mr. Gregory stated that the owners of the property at 120 Bridgeport Avenue have offered it to the Devon Revitalization Committee for use as a parking lot. Al Dente had purchased the property next door and they had hoped they would develop it but was not able to do so. The next meeting should complete the storm drain study and they will have a recommendation on how to fix the problem. Mr. Gregory stated that there is a video on the camera going down the storm drain and if anyone was interested in watching the video it is available. The planning stage for Phase III, which is the streetscape from Kerema down to Naugatuck, is underway.
- B. Walnut Beach Redevelopment – None
- C. Correspondence – None
- D. Proposed Courthouse Expansion/Milford Post Office/Downtown Parking Structure – None
- E. Eisenhower Park - Mr. Stanton spoke with the Mayor and there has not been a lot of change. The proposal from the Committee has gone to the Park, Beach and Recreation Department and has gone to the Board of Alderman and they can make any changes that they choose to the plan. The Mayor is recommending that they carry out Phase I of the plan, which is mostly environmental restoration, and removal of evasive species. The proposal is to finance most of this with Federal funds and funds that came from both U.I. and CL&P for a power line upgrade. Recently in the paper there was an announcement about how Senator Lieberman is trying to

secure \$520,000 worth of funding that would go towards Phase I. It has passed the Senate and now it has to go to the House. There could be as much as \$500,000 to \$1M worth of money for Phase I and that should be enough to cover all of the existing improvements.

## **VII. Old Business**

Mr. Settineri stated that he had mentioned Ms. Liptak's concerns about the Animal Control Shelter. Should there be a study done on the possibility of the shelter being moved to Eisenhower Park? Mr. Kapusta mentioned that he was the closing Attorney for that property. The grant stipulation is that they had to stipulate on the land records a covenant running with the land that restricts the land use to open space, park and recreation. So this plan of operating an animal shelter by a City owned operation would not be in conformance with the stipulation that restricted covenant with the land.

Mr. Stanton mentioned that they have space for the building expansion. It is a very expensive process because it is built on very soggy soil and they have to sink the pilings to support it. Mr. Gregory mentioned that the First Selectman of Orange was not interested in joining with Milford. Ms. Alagno mentioned that they could possibly look for another site. The overall feeling of the Committee is that it would be less expensive just to add on to the existing facility.

## **VIII. New Business - None**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Holden