

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of**  
**September 26, 2007**

**PRESENT**

Members: Vice Chairman Kenneth Brannin, John DePalma, Robert Gregory, Cyrus Settineri, Peter Spalthoff

Guest: Brooke Hoberman – Rideworks, Employer Services Coordinator

Press: Frank Juliano, CT Post and Brian McCready, New Haven Register

**I. Call to Order**

Vice Chairman Brannin called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m.

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

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of August 22, 2007 as distributed.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

**III. Standing Reports**

A. Milford Chamber of Commerce – No Report

B. Milford Progress, Inc. – Mr. DePalma stated that the order of the business was to go over the downtown signage study by Wilbur Smith & Associates. Mr. DePalma stated that it is an excellent report and as they move along it will do Milford proud if everyone follows the design guidelines it would definitely enhance the appearance of downtown Milford. MPI endorsed the study and sent it to Planning & Zoning. The second item at the MPI meeting was whether the Committee wanted to comment on any ordinances regarding outside music at venues downtown. Further discussion was tabled.

C. Downtown Milford Business Association – Mr. Gregory stated that there was a major motion picture that was going to be viewed on the green on Saturday, September 29.

D. Real Estate Trends & Developments – Mr. Spalthoff commented that the sales prices in Milford have skyrocketed because people have finally found Milford. Mr. Spalthoff continued stating that he took 6 towns and cities out of New Haven and 6 comparable towns and cities in Fairfield County. He used Milford, Branford, Derby, Madison, New Haven and

Guilford. He used in Fairfield County, Stratford, Trumbull, Shelton, Wilton, Westport and Norwalk.

The long and short of it is that in this time 2006 those six towns in New Haven County had sold 1,055 homes and 2007 they are up to 1,142 homes. This is an increase of about 8 or 8½%. Of those six towns they saw decreases in sales prices but nothing substantial. In Fairfield County in 2006 there were 1,811 sales compared to 2007 where there was 1,607. They saw a turn down of 141 homes, which is about a 7½% drop. You had places like Norwalk that lost a difference of 80 homes from last year to this year with a net of \$25,000 a house. The biggest drop is Wilton. Wilton lost 21 sales from last year to this year and the average sales price dropped \$78,000. The average sales price is \$983,000 and the average price in Milford is \$337,000. Mr. Spalthoff continued by saying that Milford is holding its own.

- E. Building Permit Task Force – Mr. Settineri stated that there were some interesting, new, and the Mayor gave very positive guidelines to the Building Department and some have been implemented. Mr. Settineri believes that this issue still needs the Committee's attention and he plans on having a meeting next month to see what type of progress has actually been made and if there are more steps that the Committee can take. Mr. Settineri wanted to know if there are some real tasks that the Committee can sink their teeth into. Mr. Settineri said he spoke with the Mayor and he would like the Mayor to make up a list of items that he would like the Committee to put their attention on. He thought the Building Department issue was important to the economic development of Milford and so the Mayor is going to get back to Mr. Settineri before the next EDC meeting. Mr. Settineri and the Mayor also discussed the animal shelter issue, which is not really an issue that the City of Milford is going to get involved in for various reasons. Mr. Settineri continued by saying that he would like to see the EDC Committee start to be more proactive on things to happen. Mr. Gregory stated that he developed a list of possible actions the commission could take a year ago. He said that he would send a copy to everyone on the Commission. A discussion continued about the issue of vandalism and graffiti in Milford.

- IV. **Devon, Downtown & General Economic Activity** – Mr. Gregory stated that the Site Selector Tour went very well. Mr. Gregory also stated that he received feedback from the professionals at CERC for the State that this one was one of the better events. The site selectors were very impressed with the area. The tour was centered on the Pilot Pen Tournament but they also took them up in a helicopter and flew them over the six towns. They also took them out on Mr. D'Amato's yacht and took them from Long Wharf up to Milford Harbor. The site selectors stayed in Milford at Hyatt Place. In

addition to the three sites that they featured, they were also able to tell them about other developments in Milford. CT Limo donated limousine service so they were able to drive them around in style.

Mr. Gregory continued by saying that the commission has had previous discussions about the Gathering site. The developer has come back with a plan for only a CVS on site. Most of the development in Milford is redevelopment of existing sites. The property that is available is very limited. Mr. Gregory mentioned that the City does have some derelict properties and they are probably the ones that are getting graffiti on them. Mr. Brannin recommended that the Committee send out thank you letters to the people who have come in and created these new shopping areas for the Chairman. Mr. Spalthoff also suggested that some of the Committee go to the openings of these businesses. Also suggested was to send a welcome letter to new businesses.

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

Mr. Gregory stated that the September 2007 activity report was attached.

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

A. Devon Revitalization Program - The major item was the one-day film shoot of Righteous Kill at the Star Café with Al Pacino and Robert Diniro. It is great from an image point of view. There were hundreds of people outside looking at the making of the movie. Al Dente made a great hit with Al Pacino. Mr. Gregory stated that since the legislation has been enacted, Community Development has gotten about half dozen calls. There are certain requirements for each shoot. The site locator for Righteous Kill happens to be living in Milford at this time. This is something people will always remember that happened in Devon. Mr. Gregory stated that you couldn't buy that kind of publicity.

B. Walnut Beach Redevelopment – No Report

C. Correspondence – None

D. Proposed Courthouse Expansion/Milford Post Office/Downtown Parking Structure – There is some money allocated from the state. The plan is still the same.

E. Eisenhower Park – No Report

## **VII. Old Business** - None

## **VIII. New Business** – None

## **Guest Speaker**

Ms. Brooke Hoberman is a New Yorker from Queens and she went to college at Quinnipiac. Ms. Hoberman went to work for a law firm in New Haven for many years as a paralegal. She decided she didn't like this career choice so she went into ride sharing. Ms. Hoberman continued by saying that she started working at Rideworks in 1984 and she was the first employee that her boss hired and she has been there ever since. It is a definite switch from thinking she was going to be teaching Spanish in High School to ride sharing. Ms. Hoberman stated that she will not be able to get rid of congestion but she certainly can give the Committee some information about Rideworks and what they offer to company owners. It is good information for the Economic Development Commission to have when you are talking to companies that are thinking about moving into Milford.

The services that Rideworks provides are free and they can be very helpful to employers. Rideworks is a 501c3 company and they promote car-pooling and vanpooling and the Connecticut DOT funds them. They handle the south central region of Connecticut. If a Milford employer had some issues they would contact Rideworks. If an employer had some issues within Stamford you would call MetroPool and if you had a company in Hartford you would call RideShare Company. There are three ride sharing brokerages in Connecticut funded by the DOT. Rideworks assists using the destination so it doesn't matter where a person lives. It matters where that person is trying to go.

Why know about Rideworks and what they can do to help? Ms. Hoberman said basically by promoting ride sharing at your company, you will improve employee productivity, you will have an easier time with recruitment and retention, you can reduce absenteeism and late arrivals, improve employee morale, reduce parking and office space and the employer can get a tax savings. Ms. Hoberman gets a salary not a commission. The van price is based on round trip miles so if you are going door to door to door to pick people up it is going to add to the trip and it is going to add to the cost of each individual vanpool person who pays. They usually suggest starting a vanpool in one area and just making one or two stops and then just going to the work site.

Ms. Hoberman gave out handouts. The packet contained information about the I-95 project, short-term construction projects in the area that you can also get onto a web site. You can look at cameras that let you know what's happening on I-95 from Greenwich all the way up to Branford. Rideworks promotes telecommuting and they can come in and for free, set up a telecommuting program for one person or seven people and this way the company does not lose that valuable employee. Mr. Gregory mentioned that this program has excellent numbers of people using this telecommuting program.

Ms. Hoberman also mentioned that the DOT is having Rideworks promote Nuride, which is an online ride-sharing program where an employee can get online and look for a ride from Point A to Point B. Again this program does not cost the employer any money. The Shore Line East brochure was in the package. If you have employees who live on the shoreline they can take the train from the shoreline into New Haven and then take Metro North from New Haven to Milford. Milford Transit has a shuttle that runs from the train station up to Wheelers Farms Road.

Rideworks does a lot of work with companies that are relocating. There is also a tax advantage to promoting ride sharing. If you have an employee who could potentially take a bus or a train to get to work, the Federal Government allows you to take money out of your paycheck pre-tax. If someone takes a train from Greenwich to Milford and the Metro North train ticket costs say \$100 a month, the company can take the money out of their paycheck pre-tax. It reduces the amount of payroll taxes that the company pays and it also reduces the amount of payroll taxes that the employee has taken out of their paycheck. This also works for parking. There are no forms that need to get filled out. You need to just make a copy of the train pass. There is a commuter information center that Rideworks can make available to you if you have room in your company. There are buses that are in Milford that run from Woodmont, West Shore, Coastal Link, etc. Rideworks can come out and do a transportation fair on the site of your company. Ms. Hoberman said you could sign up for statewide E Alerts as well. They are provided by the DOT.

Ms. Hoberman also mentioned that if the employer hires lower income employees there is also something called the Regional Growth Connection. The employer can contact RGC and they will get people to job interviews or get the new employee to their new jobs for the first month of employment.

Transportation will be critical now that the Moses Wheeler Bridge and the Q-Bridge are going to be worked on. The Shore Line East will be used because Milford has a lot of employees that come in from New Haven and now they can connect up with Rideworks. Mr. Gregory also stated that Milford would be working with all of the retailers that are going to need employees with transportation for Milford Crossing, Milford Marketplace, Westfield Mall and Lowe's. There are going to be thousands of workers that are going to be coming into Milford and Rideworks can help with this situation.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Holden