

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting of
November 26, 2008

PRESENT

Members: Chairman Robert Kapusta, Vice Chairman John DePalma,
Robert Gregory, Tessa Marquis, Bob Stanton

Guest: Peter Stein – Executive Director, Regional Growth Partnership

Press: Frank Juliano – CT Post

NOT PRESENT Kathy Alagno, Ken Brannin, Cyrus Settineri, Peter Spalthoff

I. Call to Order

Chairman Kapusta 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 October 22, 2008 as distributed.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

III. Standing Reports

- A. Milford Chamber of Commerce – Chairman Kapusta reported for Ms. Alagno who was unable to attend. He stated that the Chamber recently completed its membership drive in October bringing in over 125 new members to the ranks. The Chamber now consists of 825 members. A sincere thanks was extended to Louise Hebert of Hebert Jewelers and Bob Russo of the Milford Bank who chaired the successful drive.

The Chamber is going to be temporarily relocating their office due to the fact that the Taylor Library building is in need of mold remediation.

- B. Milford Progress, Inc. – The police department is seeking funding for an officer to oversee parking. Mr. DePalma stated that the signage regulation public hearing went well at the Planning & Zoning Board.

The most important news, Mr. DePalma continued, is that a new Holiday Inn and conference center are to be built at 185 Plains Road on 13 acres.

The \$40 million project will be a nice addition to the tax base for the City. MPI voted unanimously to endorse this project.

- C. Downtown Milford Business Association – Ms. Marquis reported that the tree lighting ceremony would be on November 28. The lamplight stroll will take place on December 5 and 6. Beth El Shelter will also host an event on December 6th in the Parsons Auditorium.
- D. Real Estate Trends & Developments – No Report
- E. Building Permit Task Force – No Report
- F. Stratford Liaison Report – Mr. Stanton handed out a business newsletter from the Stratford office of Economic Development. Mr. Stanton stated that the November meeting of the Stratford Economic Development Commission was cancelled. A discussion continued regarding real estate action and the tremendous drop in Stratford and in most communities.

IV. Devon, Downtown & General Economic Activity – Mr. Gregory pointed out that Town & Country Florists has closed. The Milford Plaza Shopping Center that Shop-Rite and Bob's occupies was sold to a New York based company. The old Showcase Cinemas on Cherry Street is listed with Summit Development Corporation. The old Showcase Cinemas in Orange has been purchased by U.I.

V. Items & Matters of Continuing Interest

- A. Devon Revitalization Program – Mr. Gregory stated that they have signed a contract with G. Pic & Sons, the same contractor that completed Phase II. A few items need to be worked out with DOT and the Phase III project should begin some time in the winter of 2008 or at the latest, spring of 2009. The Devon Revitalization Committee voted on to pursue the purchase of 120 Bridgeport Avenue for an additional 12 spaces for parking.
- B. Walnut Beach Redevelopment – Mr. Gregory announced that the Walnut Beach \$1M grant is available. This grant will cover the Stowe Farm design phase, streetscape and beach access for the end of Naugatuck Avenue.
- C. Correspondence – Mr. Gregory stated that one letter was sent out to a new company and more will be sent soon.
- D. Proposed Courthouse Expansion/Milford Post Office/Downtown Parking Structure – Chairman Kapusta commented that there has been no

change and that they are still waiting for the State, Public Works and the Post Office to take action.

E. Status of Signage Regulations – Wayfinding Signs – Mr. DePalma stated above in his report.

F. Available Business Sites – The CERC Sitefinder listing is included in the package.

VI. Old Business - None

New Business – Guest Speaker: Peter Stein – Executive Director of the Regional Growth Partnership. Mr. Stein stated that he has been with RGP for 2 ½ years and has completed his undergraduate and graduate program at Yale. He then completed seminary school and has been ordained as a rabbi.

The Regional Growth Partnership is a public and private partnership organized as an independent and non-profit corporation to promote economic development for the region. They have several different committees, including Brownfield's, strategic planning and more. Many people go to the Regional Growth Partnership for loans and grants.

Mr. Stein continued by saying that the last fifteen to twenty years job growth has been flat. The Brownfield's program is vital because we are out of land in our region. Our businesses need to expand and we need to reuse and clean up land we have presently. Mr. Stein stated that we need to market the region. Mr. Stein also stated that RGP is creating a regional website working with the Council of Governments. Mr. Gregory is Milford's representative.

Mr. Stein stated that the regional economic agenda focuses on five key areas, which are regional marketing & communication, transportation, business development, work force housing, and land use planning, policies & regulation. Under each category there are objectives and strategies. RGP facilitated this project but implementation will be spread among many different agencies. A discussion continued on how to organize the public and private sectors and key in on important objectives.

The Commission decided not to meet in December.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna E. Holden