ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Meeting of March 23, 2016

Present: Commissioners: John O'Neil, acting Chairman; Michael Lynch, Vice Chairman; John DePalma; George Hunihan; Julie Nash, Advisor

Also present: Barbara Malmberg, Sarah Washburn and Kathleen Krolak, REX Development ([*www.rexdevelopment.org*](http://www.rexdevelopment.org)*)*

Absent: Greg Harla; Victor Ferrante; Suzanne Cahill

1. CALL TO ORDER - Chairman O'Neil called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.
2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - Vice Chairman Lynch and Mr. Hunihan made and seconded a motion to approve the minutes of January 27, 2016. Unanimously approved. The unofficial minutes of the February 23, 2016 meeting were also reviewed.
3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT/INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS - Chairman O'Neil reminded the Committee this would be his last meeting as EDC Chairman and Mr. Harla would be taking over going forward.
4. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None
5. CORRESPONDENCE - None
6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY - Director Nash made several announcements including the RFQ for Downtown Development/TOD project is going out today. "Milford Day" will be held at the State Capital on April 26th and, so far, 13 Milford business and organizations are planning to attend. The schedule for "River Street Wednesdays" is complete and they are planning events for "Kick off to Summer" including fireworks on July 1st. She also reported an application has been submitted to Connecticut Office of Tourism for an award for Lisman Landing and Milford harbor.

 Director Nash discussed the need for affordable office space in Milford to accommodate small IT/Tech start-ups and is in communication with Mayor Blake about setting up shared, incubator office space to help support these small businesses. Director Nash also commented on the turnover of businesses in the downtown area and announced new businesses opening up: Galina's, Give The Dog a Bath, and Fire Engine Pizza Company. She is working on obtaining a report from the Secretary of the State of CT listing new businesses registered in Milford. She plans to send out a welcome package to those new businesses with an invitation to attend an EDC meeting to introduce themselves, talk about services they provide, get information on local resources available and would also be a good networking opportunity for them.

Ms. Malmberg offered to put the new businesses on their website and in their “Welcome to Greater New Haven Relocation Guide.” She expressed her support for the events going on in Milford and the surrounding areas and was willing to add those activities to their website as well.

1. CEDS UPDATE - Barbara Malmberg from REX Development hosted a presentation for this Commission: "*2015/16 CEDS Update: A Snapshot of the Growing Bio & Tech Sectors in South Central Connecticut*" (see link under EDC Agendas: [www.ci.milford.ct.us/sites/milfordct/files/agenda/agenda-file/rex\_development\_milford\_update\_march\_2016.pdf](http://www.ci.milford.ct.us/sites/milfordct/files/agenda/agenda-file/rex_development_milford_update_march_2016.pdf))

Regional Economic Xcelleration (REX) Development represents one region comprised of 15 towns in Connecticut. In her presentation, Ms. Malmberg explained their approach in looking at several areas of economic development in their region to focus on strengths in the community and help identify business sectors that would help support the economy. Regional data revealed the majority of employment (50%) is clustered in the Biomedical/Life Science sector. This area included industries such as healthcare, medical devices and distribution of supplies and is based primarily in the New Haven area. A discussion ensued on the importance of growing Biomedical/Life Science, manufacturing and technology sectors and how Milford can attract those types of businesses. Ms. Krolak commented on the high demand for laboratory space by Bioscience companies and suggested focusing on building an inventory of available commercial properties with laboratory accommodations. She also spoke about the strict regulations imposed upon Bioscience companies in New York, limiting how they are allowed to operate, and commented on how Milford would be an ideal relocation option for those companies.

 Commissioner O'Neil commented on the unique opportunity Milford has to attract these types of businesses and suggested scheduling an action meeting to discuss where to go from here.

Ms. Malmberg also reported on their collaboration with Gateway Community College to create a new Web Development program. Students can incorporate the program as part of their bachelor's degree or as a stand-alone certificate. The program was designed with a hands-on curriculum for students to learn specific coding skills desired by the business community and get them ready to enter the workforce. They are also working with Southern Connecticut State University and the City of New Haven to develop certification programs intended to help students obtain scientific/laboratory credentials and line up internships prior to graduation.

Ms. Washburn reported on tourism, trade shows and conferences in the region. She noted Milford as the second largest community with overnight hotel stays and announced 290 rooms were booked in Milford for a recent trade show. She talked about resources REX Development uses to promote tourism: Discover New England, Get Away Dates, Travel Writers annual book and getting involved with CT Lodging Association to create a statewide marketing campaign for tourism. She commented on Milford's accessibility to I-95 and encouraged the Committee to continue to focus on marketing tourism in Milford.

1. STANDING ITEMS/COMMITTEE REPORTS - None
2. MILFORD MARKETING PLAN & RFP STATUS UPDATE - Director Nash expected to hear back from SHU soon regarding the start date for the student project.
3. EDC PROJECT DISCUSSION - None
4. OLD BUSINESS - None
5. NEW BUSINESS - None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 a.m. A motion was unanimously carried to finalize the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee Diamond

Recorder