

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
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## MINUTES

### WORKSHOP, THURSDAY, September 20, 2012 ALDERMANIC CHAMBERS 7:00 PM

The Economic Development Commission held a Workshop on Thursday, September 20, 2012. The meeting began at 7:15 P.M.

#### Roll call:

Vincent Scarlata	present
Greg Seccombe	Late 7:25
Daniel Bogen	absent
Ralphine Siggars Ford	absent
Terri Goldson	absent
Sal Hanaif	absent
Dave Cassetti	present
Keith Murray	present
Horace Behrle	absent

4 present, 5 absent

Mr. Scarlata declared the meeting open at 7:15. The meeting began with the pledge of allegiance to the flag. A quorum was not present. Mr. Scarlata stated that he wished to have a workshop to go over a few things with the members that were present.

Mr. Scarlata discussed the Farmers Market. Apparently, there wasn't as much foot traffic as was hoped for going up to Main Street. However, we are a certified Farmers Market with the state. We accept WIC. The seniors patronize it like crazy. We are not drawing from the Hilltop.

Mr. Scarlata then stated that we had a fundraiser to solicit funds to repair the damage that vandals did to the football field at Nolan Field. He stated that many of the donations were from walk in donations rather than from the Main Street businesses.

Mr. Scarlata explained that the intention was that if we developed the downtown area, it would radiate out to the other areas. He added that we next attempted to build the relationship between Economic Development and the businesses in town. He mentioned that we held a few Business

Forum meetings to get input from the business owners. It was very successful as it gave EDC numerous ideas on how and what to improve.

Mr. Scarlata then stated that we have made many connections within the state government, such as Connecticut Main Street Center. The Commission just applied for a \$500,000 grant for West Main Street. Office of Policy and Management, Board of Regents is another contact that they have.

There has been some interest in using one of buildings for a community college annex. Hartford has been talking with the EDC due to this discussion. Recently, Mr. Scarlata has opened a conversation with the trust for public land. He further stated that we have some very good allies around the state that are willing to help the EDC. "We have all the puzzle pieces. We just haven't put the puzzle together yet."

Mr. Scarlata then stated that we started to catalog some of the empty storefronts. The web site is not only going to highlight those spaces, but we will be able to use the web site as a marketing tool. The Department of Public Lands will help us work "Green Initiatives." He stated that we have over 1,000 acres of wooded area in Ansonia. Over by Beaver Street there is almost 500 acres of land that connects to the Nature Center and over to Oxford.

He then stated that we branded Ansonia the "Home of the Bicycle." Pierre Lallement invented the bicycle in Ansonia. He lived in Ansonia. We are looking to get Lance Armstrong to come to the Bike Fest in the future. He was going to be attending this year, but when we changed the date from May to June, he was already scheduled to participate in the Triathlon. Zane's Bicycle shop is going to assist with this. He then stated that the Harvest Fest will be huge this year. There are over 100 tables for vendors for the event.

Alderman Marini then stated that Mr. Scarlata has been trying to bring in a variety of different groups into the city including the movie industry. He added that there has been at least one movie shot in the Armory in Ansonia. He then added that in regards to the Farrell's property and Copper and Brass property, the owners and the city are working together to see what they can do to develop a direction for these properties. There has been some talk about new manufacturing or even an athletic complex in one of these locations so that we can draw more people downtown. He added that we have quite a lot of historic properties on Main Street including the oldest Opera Houses in the United States.

Mr. Rich Stoltz, from Bartram & Cochran, stated that he has been hired as the consultant for the

He then questioned what the current status of Economic Development is. He asked what we would add to that in regards to Economic Development in town. He asked how the death of our Economic Development Director has impacted things. He'd like to also know what the goals are for the EDC overall. He also wanted to know what some of the positive elements of Ansonia. What are the opportunities? Mr. Stoltz then asked what are the issues, constraints, and concerns that we have.

Alderman Marini stated that the Mayor's office has taken up the slack caused by the vacancy in the position of the Director. The Mayor has really taken the "Bull by the horns in trying to be the point person to initiate contact with perspective business owners, new initiatives, etc. The River Walk has been the biggest asset that we have in the past five years. It's a drawing point not only for Ansonia, but also to draw others from all over into the downtown area.

Mr. Scarlata then stated that the City Center Plan is the closest that we have had to an Economic

Development plan. They had no vehicle to move it forward, at the time there was no EDC. There was no plan as such. Things just happened.

Alderman Marini then mentioned that there have been some very good studies done in the past by various groups such as Main Street Development, Connecticut Main Street, and Yale. The problem was that the plans were too vague to implement or there wasn't enough "hand holding" to get through the process.

One of the first things that we started to get back into when the EDC was restarted three years ago was trying to get back into the stream of getting Small Cities Grants. There were a number of years that we had not been able to get any funding. We have been able to get \$300,000 the first year for housing rehabilitation, and twice more since then. The most recent being just yesterday. The consultant that we hired for the grants was Lisa Low and Associates. She was very successful with the programs. The EDC office has been occupied with the Small Cities grants at this time.

Mr. Murray then stated that they are ready to start launching things. They are currently working on the business loan program, the tax incentive program.

Mr. Scarlata then mentioned that the entire town is an Enterprise Corridor. There are nice incentives for new businesses coming into town due to this fact.

Mr. Stoltz then asked what the goals are for Economic Development. He was told that the goal is to help businesses that want to move into the city be able to do just that, move into the city. However, without a director, the Commission has had to be a proxy for the director and do much more than they should. Other commissions are marketing entities.

Mr. Stoltz then asked what the positive aspects of Ansonia are. He was told that the positive aspects are the school system, the athlete teams, the youth, the historical landmarks, (the Purple Heart was reenacted in 1932 in the Armory, the arc light was invented in Ansonia at the Dairy Mart location, the Nature Center, Emmett O'Brien Technical School, the railroad, the small businesses that are committed to stay in the city.

Mr. Stoltz then asked what other opportunities that we have. Other than the available factories what else is there? In terms of marketing opportunities, Wakelee Avenue is a corridor from Route 8 that goes directly to Griffin Hospital. At one time Wakelee Avenue was a thriving street with many doctors' offices and a pharmacy. It is a gateway. Unfortunately, the downtown area is isolated from the highway entrances. Mr. Stoltz asked what the gateways into the city are. He was told Route 34, Route 8 south (where Sullivan's and Nolan Field are located), and Route 8 North (Pershing Drive). Along Main Street, there are a number of very good restaurants, Crave, Antonio's, Koi, Lanza's and Hot Tamale's.

He was told that the board feels that we need more businesses like Chez Lollypop ("entertainment shopping"). Mr. Murray stated that it would be great if we could bring in more businesses so that people would like to walk up one side of Main Street and down the other. Unfortunately, on one side of the street there is Farrell's, a big empty parking lot, a lawyer's office, the Senior Center, Seccombe's, a bank, the post office, and then City Hall.

Mr. Scarlata then stated that the ATP Building, where the Senior Center is located, Duke Realty might be coming off the lease as of the 25<sup>th</sup> of September. If that were to happen, we are looking to put in a College Annex. One of the local building owners is looking to buy the building and

develop it into a College Building. Housatonic Community College has been in to look at the building and give an appraisal. They do not have the funds to rehab a facility for them, and working with the Board of Regents would be the only other way to get the College in here. The Board of Regents can make the call to place them, and then they will talk the state into giving us the money to do the Rehab. However, now we have someone that is willing to turn it into a school for us.

Mr. Stoltz then asked what the concerns, issues and constrains have been. What has been standing in the way of things? Mr. Scarlata stated that one of the issues is Zoning Regulations. He then explained that Zoning has a City Center Plan. They have "overlay zones." This is very confusing. Who can go into what areas.

Mr. Stoltz then stated that this meeting was very helpful to him. He is going to be having a few more meetings with others regarding what we can do. There will be a lot of demographic financial market based information that will be gathered. They will figure out what the highest and best uses are, what some of the problems and opportunities are. They will be developing a brand for Ansonia. All of that will all come together in the Economic Development Plan. They will have two Public Hearings during this process so they can have the Public involved and get their input.

Mr. Murray stated that one of the ideas that the Commission had was to proactively look for specific businesses and bring them into the city, such as a Bicycle shop since we ARE the home of the Bicycle.

Mr. Scarlata asked what he expects from the Commission in the next few weeks. He was told that if there were anything that he may not already have, that would be helpful. Mr. Scarlata stated that he could give him copies of all of the studies that have been done for the city.

The meeting ended at 8:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Sardinha  
Secretary