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## MINUTES

**PUBLIC FORUM, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2012  
ALDERMANIC CHAMBERS 7:00 PM**

**Mr. Dick Stoltz:** My name is Dick Stoltz and I'm with Bartram & Cochran. We are a national commercial real estate economic development-consulting firm. We are headquartered in Hartford. We've worked all across the country and we've worked particularly in the Northeast, especially in Connecticut, all across the state of Connecticut. We are working on developing a Strategic Economic Plan of Development for the city of Ansonia. To do that we are holding a Public Forum so that you can provide information to the development of the plan and we're looking at two basic categories of information. We're looking for information on what you consider to be good opportunities for Ansonia. What would you like to see here? The other side of the equation is what you see as possible concerns or constraints for economic development. Now with that I'm going to turn it over to the audience. Just raise your hand we'll recognize you and Carol is taking copious minutes here tonight, but the purpose of this is to hear you. Yes?

**Joe Miller:** I have a concern. Okay...

**Mrs. Sardinha:** Excuse me, can we have name and address?

**Mr. Miller:** Miller, Joseph. You should know that.

**Mrs. Sardinha:** Yes, I do, but I don't know where you live, Mr. Miller.

**Mr. Miller:** Roundtree Drive. I have a concern. I had a concern for twelve years. I used to work in this building for twelve years. Okay? The people hanging out in the park. All day long, they sit out there. A few years back, a baby died in the park after taking drugs. Okay. There's been police incidences there. Okay? And if I was going to open up a business on Main Street and I saw that crowd of people during the day, I would not open up a business here in Ansonia.

**Mr. Stoltz:** And this is the part right next to city hall?

**Mr. Miller:** Right next door.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Yeah, okay.

**Mr. Miller:** There's a park on West Main Street that they could go to, right. I would suggest putting those loitering signs in the park and you're going to eliminate all them hanging around.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Okay. I hear you.

**Mr. Miller:** Okay. That's it.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Yes?

**Natalie Biasucci:** Natalie Biasucci, 57 Rockwood Avenue, Ansonia.

**Mr. Stoltz:** You might have to spell that.

**Ms. Biasucci:** B I A S U C C I

**Mrs. Sardinha:** Thank you.

**Ms. Biasucci:** I would like to see small manufacturing come back to the Valley. And I really would not like to see before businesses come, any housing, any more housing for, whether it, for the elderly, for or even high, higher housing until we have 3 more business in the community.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Okay. Anybody else? Yes sir.

**Edward Musate:** Edward Musate, 21 Castle Lane, Ansonia.

**Mr. Stoltz:** I'd ask you to just spell your last name.

**Mr. Musate:** MUSATE

**Mr. Stoltz:** okay.

**Mr. Musate:** okay, There was a, Anaconda that employed hundreds of people and, uh, for a salary they're going to be out of a job, all right.

**Mr. Stoltz:** and you said eliminate what?

**Mr. Musate:** You're going to elim..., you're going to take Brass away so that people there are going to be out of jobs, correct?

**Mr. Stoltz:** Well, I don't know why you're saying, "take Brass away." I need to have some background on that.

**Mr. Musate:** Because the last meeting, they were saying that they want someone to come in and buy American Brass. So that all of the people working there will be out of a job, both salary and hourly.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Okay.

**Mr. Musate:** The whole building is, there's half that's being used. The other half is not.

**Mr. Stoltz:** So any other thoughts of what you'd like to see.

**Dorothy Cwanek:** Dorothy Cwanek, CWANEK, 44 Roosevelt Drive. It sounds wonderful to try and have some kind of townhouses or condos for young people, but you really have to really study to see whether or not young people would want to move in here because there's nothing for them to do. I had asked my nephew one time when we were driving through Main Street if he would ever consider, you know if they built condos and he said to me, "Absolutely no. There's nothing around here. So I think before they do something like that, they need to have... We're getting some restaurants but they need to do something for young people to occupy themselves. And that could be an issue also, because a lot of times... kids aren't like they used to be. And if you bring them in, what's going to happen? Are they going to, are there going to be fights, drugs, or whatever, so..?"

**Mr. Stoltz:** Okay. What else would other people like to see?

**Ms. Cwanek:** I think the other thing that I just thought of. You know there's a lot of businesses here, small businesses. And I hate to say it, but I don't know, I don't know who half of them are. Could we have a list or something? I think it would be beneficial for people to be able to pick up either in the grocery stores or something like that.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Thank you.

**Howie Kreiger:** Howie Kreiger, from Main Street, Spector Furniture.

**Mr. Stoltz:** The last name again?

**Mr. Kreiger:** Kreiger. KREIGER. I'm one of the Main Street merchants and what we've found is, I think there's a, there's a disconnect with the merchants and, and the City government as far as getting the merchants collectively together to be proactive and pulling together. Among all

the businesses and the buildings on Main Street and some of the side streets as well, certainly need to be updated and they look like they're vacant. They look rundown. I have the Farrell Corporation right next door to me (inaudible) City Hall. You have broken windows. It's a mess. Certainly not attractive to new businesses coming in. And we've been there 120 years and we've seen the good times and the bad times. If you look back ten, fifteen years ago, yes Main Street Ansonia has, the town has grown. It has improved in my opinion. There's a lot of room, a lot of space, space to grow.

**Mr. Stoltz:** No merchants association right now?

**Mr. Kreiger:** No there is. There is. In fact, Vinnie (*Secretary's note: chairman of Economic Development, Vinnie Scarlata*), has been very instrumental trying to get people together, all of the merchants. Previously, there has not been communication and as a result, I think there's a lack of confidence with the merchants to get together and follow through and have things done. And Vinnie's been working very hard to hop over those hurdles, but it's a very difficult task. But certainly, you're getting more diverse businesses in the city that are going to generate traffic. (inaudible). Target and Big Y, it's great, but what happens is folks come in and they do their shopping but then they leave, so that the traffic flow doesn't allow them to come up through Main Street and see what, all the merchants are here. To see what's... And we've got some great, we have some great, great merchants here that have been here for a long time that offer a good variety of products. They're not always seen.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Well what would you want? I mean in a world in terms of the interaction of merchants and the City government? What would you like to see happen?

**Mr. Kreiger:** I think that that's a great, if they're, if there program in that, in, selectively chosen, part of the problem I think is that we, everybody is so busy, its hard for a merchant to get up out of their own workplace to organize a program. And that's, that's the challenge because the bakery is looking for something different than, than a furniture store. And the idea of getting people not just from Ansonia but from the outside towns from in other words, Bethany or Monroe or Trumbull, you have, or Shelton, and have people come and enjoy the day or get to know the merchants. That is, that is a big challenge. Can I ask if, if you folks have, have done a similar program for other cities or towns that, another model city that's similar to Ansonia?

**Mr. Stoltz:** We've worked all across New England on cities that are not identical to Ansonia, but they're roughly the size, plus or minus, they have historic districts. They have manufacturing, industrial that's left large vacant spaces. And what we do with that, we will look at down towns. So, yes, we've, we've done this.

**Mr. Kreiger:** All right, because I would think that there we're not so different than a lot of other

cities.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Sure.

**Mr. Kreiger:** Our problems that are very similar across the board.

**Mr. Stoltz:** That's actually true. The solutions are, they have to be customized for each municipality. For locations, demographics, a whole bunch of different things, so that's true. You're similar to a lot of other towns but the answers have to be unique to Ansonia. That's what we're working on.

**Mr. Stoltz:** I think you had..

**James Foley:** Yeah...

**Mr. Stoltz:** Could you just identify yourself?

**Mr. Foley:** Jim Foley, 80 Garden Street. I'd like to see some emphasis on arts and education in an economic development plan. I think it's important. So for example, we have a number of large vacant industrial buildings as you pointed out, there are organizations around the country that specialize in turning those into artists' lofts, little (inaudible) for example,

Artspaces\* is an organization that did exactly that down in Bridgeport, and it's done it successfully in places like New Orleans and Philadelphia, and all kinds of other places. And that's the kind of stuff that makes for a destination, for people to come from out of town. Generate foot traffic. I think, also that it has the potential to increase residency, to make a bit of a scene, and also to, to connect to the local schools.

And education in Ansonia, it's a difficult draw for businesses and in turn a draw for families. As an example, up until recently, it used to have to be a lottery to see if your kid is going to get into a full day kindergarten or half-day kindergarten. And my understanding now it's, they got rid of full day and now it's just half day. My kids attend a local Catholic school and I know for a fact that the lack of a local full day kindergarten is a problem for working families. And so that's also a problem for businesses. So I think that's something that really needs to be addressed.

Another proposal that I'd like to put forward is, are you familiar with the "Maker Movement" and "Mass Customization" and the "Internet of Things"? If you look at Make Magazine, look at the Maker Faire,\*\* two weekends ago over 100,000 people went to the New York Hall of Science to the grounds there to visit one of two annual conventions that Make Magazine has run and we're in an area now where there is a (inaudible) people who, they're not afraid of their

phones, to (inaudible) to take them apart so you're seeing things like 3-D printing and other technologies which, in education spaces and especially coming, from the west coast they're starting to arrive here in this region, because New York City is making a big push for this. You're seeing this movement happen.

There are, there are places called "Hackerspaces"§ that are arising all around the country. Literally places that are run, like gyms for people that are not working out, but they keep lockers there and they build on weekends and take soldering irons and a blow torch and a lap top and figure out how to put a sensor for their houseplants that will send them an e-mail when they need water. Stuff like that. It strikes me that the history of this community and Valley Communities in general, our history in terms of manufacturing, with our strong technological schools in the area. It seems (inaudible) ideally suited to the personality and history of the community. It also is a place that, and an opportunity for young people to get involved. Again, it can connect to the school system. We have hackerspaces in some of these buildings. They provide opportunities for us to partner with places like Sikorsky's and General Electric which have a vested interest in, in not only maintaining, but developing new STEM talent in, from this community, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, you know, perhaps offers and opportunities for us to pitch sponsored partnerships with Sikorsky or whichever (inaudible). Actually, their budget could support a space downtown, which could offer workshops and seminars to families and kids on weekends, which could offer a place for kids to go after school. To be able to learn how to program, they can learn how to hack as it were. This may seem like something that is, fantastic but (inaudible) there as again, I teach in schools. This is a huge and growing movement. Especially now coming to the East Coast because New York City is developing a lot of infrastructure to support the rise of science and science education and science manufacturing in this country.

Another model I think that can possibly work again, you think of a vacant industrial spaces, those are the kind of places that people are successfully trying to do incubators for small startup businesses, right? So the city of Stamford for example, took what was a vacant former city Town Hall and they put together funding with outside and non-profit organizations to create flex space for entrepreneurs, internet startups all these other places to go and have some office space, have some support have some funding to be able to direct them towards sources of loans, towards town and development. You put them all together and there are going to be good places that will come out of it. If we have enough opportunities to do things like that, to be able to offer support to female and minority businesses in this area to go into, you know, say, "Listen, we can provide space. We can provide internet. We can provide mentoring. We can provide support for people who want to start businesses. And we can do it cheaper because we have some infrastructure that's unused. We can do that. So, those are, those are a couple of ideas I have, in terms of big program stuff.

Strictly as kind of “window dressing,” something I would love to see that big brick wall on Main Street and Bridge Street be turned into a mural. Right now, it’s ugly. It’s patchy. There’s a nice little gazebo underneath it and I think it’s kind of an eyesore. I think there are some places in the city that can benefit from, from beautification projects like that. You know, we have the riverwalk right now basically dead ends at a place where you don’t know how to get to it except to go to Derby, where it connects to Derby. You have to go down this brushy embankment through the (inaudible). It looks like a place you wouldn’t want to take your kids because it looks “sketchy.” I’m hoping that it won’t be too long, too much longer before we continue and extend that Riverwalk project. Okay, that’s something that absolutely crucial. Thank you.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Yes. Could you just give our names...

**Ms. Catherine Lyddon:** I’m sorry. I’m Catherine and I own Chez Lollypop on Main Street.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Can I have your name again, please?

**Ms. Lyddon:** Cat Lyddon. LYDDON.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Okay.

**Ms. Lyddon:** And I’m also a merchant on Main Street.

**Mr. Stoltz:** And what was the business name?

**Ms. Lyddon:** Chez Lollypop.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Okay.

**Ms. Lyddon:** I have to say that I had also looked forward earlier in the merchant meetings that we should try to get some of the unused industrial space turned into artists coops because they don’t have much to be improved in order to do that. And they very definitely are a draw, especially on weekends. Which is a time that downtown is typically very quiet. (inaudible) So having that would (inaudible) and I do like all the other ideas as well. One of the things though that (inaudible) I would also like to point out is, I was hoping to try, I had also looked forward and still hoping to achieve a more cohesive look to the upper stories of the town in general. The façade. Not the one where the stores are located, but the upper façades don’t relate at all. Some of them are stuck in the 70’s and some of them are beautiful façades of the 40’s.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Just to clarify, they don’t relate to each other or to the storefront below.

**Ms. Lyddon:** They don’t relate to each other.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Okay.

**Ms. Lyddon:** So there's, the town is very, doesn't know what era its living in and we'd get way more traffic if we'd be tied together in some way with a color scheme, some sort of element that is the same, even if it's a holder for signs or something. And thirdly, is more of a problem than a suggestion. I have had several people say to me that, and I know they're trying to address it, and it's a problem all over the country, but downtown, because you didn't have anything happening, became a focal area for homeless, drug addicted and people who are just wondering around because they have nothing else, you know, they have nothing to do. And, there are some local facilities for, apparently, there's just an element (inaudible) of this group that is still uh, hanging around downtown all day, every day, you see them in threes. It's a problem.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Why is that?

**Ms. Lyddon:** Cause they have nowhere to go. They are not welcome or there's no room for them at the shelters, or they have issues that make them unsuitable. And it's keeping them, You have beautiful parks that they've built down here with benches, but families are not sitting on them.

**Mr. Stoltz:** You see I think, just before you got here that similar comments were made.

**Ms. Lyddon:** Okay. And I, I just feel like rather than simply chasing them out, it's almost as though there has to be, I know there's a social club down town, it's next to my store, but I think there has to be some place that can be created for them. Where they are allowed to hang out all day. Okay, just so you know.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Yes sir.

**Mr. Musate:** I would, do you need my name again?

**Mr. Stoltz:** Yes.

**Mr. Musate:** Edward Musate, 21 Castle Lane, Ansonia. Farrell Building, I would suggest to turn it into an XL center, so you could have something, Bridgeport has something, something going on. After Hartford or Bridgeport, there's nothing in Ansonia. No events are happening in Ansonia.

**Ms. Lyddon:** What's an XL?

**Mr. Musante:** An arena like they have in, an XL Center in Hartford, Bridgeport has an arena....

**Mr. Stoltz:** Yes sir.

**Mr. Dennis Quinn:** Dennis Quinn, 15 Holbrook. It seems to me you get this railroad running and this fellow's idea and check out the building next door here, to make sure it's suitable, and then we could be doing something with the building and if you get the railroad to go through on a regular basis. You've got to do something about the railroad. The other thing is I had in mind, speaking, Can you, I don't know, but can you close down Main Street? I mean, it seems to me that if you go over the bridge and make a left, go to the light and make a right, you can go right around town.

**Ms. Lyddon:** They close Main Street all the time.

**Mr. Quinn:** Okay.

**Mr. Stoltz:** But what are you getting at that... (inaudible)

**Mr. Quinn:** To make it, like a park. I know they did it in New York City. They closed off, they closed off,

**Mr. Stoltz:** Like a pedestrian mall?

**Mr. Quinn:** Yes. Exactly. I'm not to just make.. I'm just making a suggestion. But they do it all the time.

**Ms. Lyddon:** They close it for events.

**Mr. Quinn:** Okay. Well I mean, (inaudible) then they suggest about getting to know the, maybe have an event. Maybe have two or three events. Maybe close it for a couple of days. I don't know. Okay. I'm just here to make a suggestion. Sorry. I'm...

**Mr. Stoltz:** You're entitled to say anything tonight.

**Mr. Quinn:** You're right. Something, Maybe they can do something like that. Maybe a sports thing. And again, with these buildings that are around here, it seems to me, it's pretty simple but it's like he was saying, you can put the same things in these things, they've done it in Stanford, they done them in New York, they've done them all over the country. We've got buildings here just sitting here. You've got a railroad out there.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Other thoughts? Yes.

**Ms. Lyddon:** I was just getting here to make another negative. These suggestions for murals on walls, which is a great one, was made before and there was, there was a lot of red tape trying to get it. Because that is a great idea and it was suggested before, and I love to see it too, artwork. I was even suggesting that someone could, the buildings that have been removed, could become a view down sculpture park, without having to have much improvement done to them and they would be fenced off and only viewed from the outside on the street which would still allow whoever owns them to have more say over how it would be viewed, not having them in there getting into mischief and be a showcase for local artists. And it wouldn't be a vacant lot. It would be a museum.

**Ms. Biasucci:** I just wanted to, Natalie Biasucci, about the murals. I've been around a couple of places in the country where they have murals and if that ever came to be downtown, it needs to be decided, what types, but usually it's, they do, one of the nicest, nicer things that they do every school year, is the history of the area and not just a picture or frivolous thing, I guess, the history of the city, the area.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Yes.

**Ms. Cwanek:** Dorothy Cwanek, I would be nice if we could do something with the Opera House.

**Mr. Stoltz:** What would you like to do?

**Ms. Cwanek:** Me personally? I would love to see the theater brought in to it.

**Mr. Stoltz:** You mean live performances?

**Ms. Cwanek:** Yes.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Awesome.

**Mrs. Sardinha:** Excuse me, Dorothy, what's your address?

**Ms. Cwanek:** 44 Roosevelt.

**Mrs. Sardinha:** Okay. Thanks.

**Ms. Lyddon:** (inaudible) The owner is not amicable. (inaudible) There is nothing planned yet.

I suspect it's a huge expense involved because of the (inaudible) the stairways are not up to spec.

**Mr. Foley:** It's across from Seccombe's. It's historical. There has to be money available.

**Ms. Lyddon:** It is certainly an idea, but it's a private owner. (inaudible) There's got to be... *(lots overlapping talk)* it's something I heard, so I was going to say if there's maybe a way, we'd like to see that opera house up and running, even if it was just showing quote unquote films and not like a (inaudible) just to keep the historical space but so you're going to have to definitely go to owner of the Opera House space.

**Mr. Foley:** There's lots of precedent for that too. You have a house in Waterbury, a house in downtown Stanford. *(overlapping voices)*

**Mr. Stoltz:** okay.

**Mr. Joe Dimech:** Joe Dimech, 99 Beaver Street.

**Mrs. Sardinha:** I'm sorry.

**Mr. Dimech:** Joe Dimech, 99 Beaver Street

**Mrs. Sardinha:** DEM?

**Mr. Dimech:** DIMECH. I think that the one thing that all this needs, everything, all the suggestions that people are throwing in or need, is it economically feasible. All these ideas are good, and pie in the sky, you've got a theater in the Opera House and true, people can go, but what's going to happen. When you get dressed and go to New Haven. That's definitely going to happen. I think to bring money downtown is one of the main goals. The easiest way to bring money downtown I think is, to make use of all these buildings. I think the city owns one of the buildings. He's working with one of the guys they did a deal to get out of the deal. If you put in, here's the distinction I've keep seeing. I've never seen (inaudible) downtown, they want to throw in either seniors, senior center type things, senior living, I don't know why maybe they get subsidies or something like that or they want to throw in something for low income. You need higher income. You need people who live downtown who walk down the street. Go to the theater. Go to a restaurant. Go and see a show and spend money locally, right. Who has the money right now? The younger people. I mean, they have disposable income. And so younger folks who are trying to get their fresh start can make, take great advantage of that.

I see they redid the parking. You can use the parking downtown now. So if you redistrict or rezone these new buildings these new uses that are being, these buildings are being put to. To be

either studio or one bedroom. You would accomplish that entire goal because you're not going to get you know the, large family living downtown which is a huge concern. A lot of people are screwed if we're going to be burdened by more kids, right? Because if the downtown is a place like they did in Shelton, I mean, which is a fantastic model. Look what they did down there, they refurbished these buildings. They put storefronts down in the base of it. Same thing with the Nine Square in New Haven. You put the storefronts in the base of it, which will draw people that live in the area, and then you have people living upstairs with disposable income. Now you have a vital cultural area downtown.

Once there's money here, once there's people here willing to spend the money on the, because they have a little bit left over, then they'll go out to these local places and spend it there. Once you have the local money, then you implement the other stuff. You know. But you need to start with the money first. I think that's your biggest opportunity right now. And here's a question, I don't know. Farrell's, is there anybody working there anymore for God's sakes?

**Ms. Cwanek:** It's not as simple as just the building.

**Mr. Dimech:** Yeah, I know Brownfields and all that stuff. I know they've got to clean it up. And refurbish the buildings and all that, but..

**Ms. Cwanek:** I don't think it's just about bringing people in. That's not the answer either. You have to have ....

**Mr. Dimech:** You get.. (inaudible) especially when you take away the projects across the river. That's another thing. And you have the most prime real estate in the city is the riverside, right. On one side of that, you have dilapidated buildings the other side you have the projects that are falling apart. You have to tear them down. Right? Now if we, we have an influx of low income housing downtown, you destroy the opportunity of bringing money downtown. Cause it's not (inaudible).

**Ms. Cwanek:** The Flood wall is pretty ugly.

**Mr. Dimech:** It is. It's disgusting. We've been looking at "Why linen" for forty years.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Yes sit.

**Mr. Tony St. Angelo:** Tony St. Angelo, Main Street, Ansonia. As a merchant, for many years on Main Street. Ansonia, if you look at other communities around us, have one of the better Main Streets. It's a state highway. It's viable. You have merchants that other towns so not have. The initiative to get more people downtown is to communicate with the people in the

surrounding areas to come and spend their money in Ansonia. You have the restaurants. You have the clothing stores. Furniture store. Pershing Drive has a hardware store. You have vital businesses but they can't sustain themselves. There needs to be better communications to get the people from not only on the hilltop, you need to get the people from the surrounding towns. A couple of the local restaurants are drawing from Bethany, Woodbridge. People are coming to Ansonia. The word has to get out initially. Enter Beacon Falls, where you have a mill that turned into 160 apartments. It took a while but to get the people to spend money in the town, one of the factors is the rail line, which is, currently being studied to get the people to where the jobs are. And if they come back there, to a nice apartment, they'll stop at the little grocery store, or they'll stop at the restaurant. So the housing on a different scale. If we improve the transportation, maybe, you know something on the short term. Stop thinking the Opera House, the private buildings, unless you get some private money, and they can walk through the system, from Zoning and building permits, at a quick pace, it's a long process. So there has to be a partnership with the developers, and the commissions and boards in the town to work in unison quickly. Not draw things out for three, four, five years.

**Mr. Dimech:** You make very strong points. I don't think anybody wants a chain restaurant. We want something nice and unique. We want to make it pretty.

**Mr. St. Angelo:** You have a Burger King, you have a McDonalds, you have a Dunkin Donuts. You have Subway. Do you have to (inaudible) It's a little spread out. You (inaudible) Pershing Drive, Wakelee Avenue, and Main Street. You need to communicate to get the people to spend their money and give them a reason to come downtown. You have, Main Street is really looking good. The storefronts, the (inaudible) need to be built. (inaudible).

**Mr. Stoltz:** Yes.

**Mr. Musate:** I have another suggestion. Do you need my name again?

**Mrs. Sardinha:** I don't see you, where are you, oh, you, go ahead.

**Mr. Musate:** Capitol Theater back in 1960's near where Dr. Haddad Park there. We should have another theater again.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Movie theater?

**Mr. Musate:** Yep. That was there back in the 60's.

**Mr. Stoltz:** You have something else?

**Ms. Lyddon:** I was going to say I watched, I used to work in Westport for almost 17 years and I've watched Norwalk trying to compete. It is important to, I think to actually pitch the empty stores to the types of businesses that you are trying to bring in. One of the things that I spoke about at our merchant, our Downtown Merchant meetings is that, like Spector's and the clothing stores and the restaurants. If your downtown doesn't have row upon row of active businesses, it won't be successful. It has to be large, similar to Stockbridge, MA, the entire town, both sides is lined with fabulous shops. And people it's a destination, you drive up there and you walk both sides of the street because every shop is fascinating, unique and interactive. It's not a dentist's office, (inaudible). Those things do have a place here, but it's really important at least for those of us who are merchants to get more merchants.

**Mr. Stoltz:** And by interactive, you mean businesses?

**Ms. Lyddon:** Interact with the public. It's a, sharp, new experience rather than a service. A service will draw, and we need services, but we have them down here. And we have a lot of restaurants now. So I would say that we need more retail merchant type of businesses that will interact with, that will be interact with, be interesting, they will come and find them. It kind of has to happen simultaneously. It has to happen all at one time, or we will all just fall away.

**Mrs. Sardinha:** Excuse me, Cat, you said that it was similar to an area that has row upon row of fabulous...

**Ms. Lyddon:** Stockbridge, MA.

**Mrs. Sardinha:** Thank you. That's exactly what I was looking for.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Who else?

**Ms. Ann Marie Gonzalez:** Hi, Ann Marie Gonzalez, 36 Highland Terrace, Ann Marie Gonzalez, 36 Highland Terrace, I have to agree with what Cat (*Ms. Lyddon*) was saying about the quality of the buildings, it goes for businesses as well, not just the other portions of the building. We have some buildings like Chez Lollypop, Spectors a number of other places and they put professional signage outside and then we have stores that have handmade painted signs such as S & J Variety, I really don't think anybody goes there. That looks like a front for something else. And the Dog Groomer, his handmade signs, they're not very pretty, they're not very professional and if I was a business coming in and saw things like that I wouldn't be very positive about it. Thank you.

**Ms. Lyddon:** We did try to get some money out of the town recently in the form of grants and things so that those small businesses that, you know, we've been fighting for the past few years,

and they actually have lasted, so obviously somebody's been shopping there or it's big a front. We have the money to improve the façades and we can all get a waiver for more. And I think that that's still available today, but I'm not positive. I think that's a big piece of it. And you look at it and there's a community, you wouldn't want to live there just over two years ago, and now it's got uniform sidewalks. They have the new light posts that we just put in. There's street signs. There's traffic lights. They're all very uniform. It's very clean looking, and even in with the stores or businesses that were kind of sketchy before, and maybe they still are, you wouldn't really necessarily notice it because it's been unified and professional and clean looking.

**Mr. Dimech:** Have you seen the Yale study that they did about ten, fifteen years ago? It addresses every one of the points that everyone is bringing up here. From what I understand, they came here, came up with ideas, and laid out a whole new framework for downtown, the streets. It would be fantastic. It never happens. You know, and that's the other end of this thing. Is all we ever hear is from (inaudible) "Hey Bill, I'm new around town we want to create new businesses. We want to be a destination. Some businesses attract other people. But without implementation, or a realistic plan that takes into consideration, especially nowadays, the plans are (inaudible) the whole country is broke and it's not going to work out. So your plan, your development, is that going to be realistic expectations of plans or is it going to be a proposal? Good luck.

**Mr. Stoltz:** We're going to have a detailed action plan for what we do attempt. I'll work, whatever we do, it's always (inaudible) and I understand something that's "pie in the sky," nice coffee table book, you do it, drop it off. But as far as this, it's just the opposite. So we are in the process of reviewing, can it happen? Will it make a difference? Are we going to have continued success? It's a huge challenge at times. I'm not here right now to give you any answers, but I think it's clear from what everybody is saying and you know from a general economic backdrop, over the last (inaudible) years (inaudible). Yes?

**Mr. Quinn:** I'm just thinking this, how can we get manufacturing back into it? I mean it's made this town in the first place.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Let's not, I don't think it's a possibility.

**Mr. Quinn:** I mean it's there. Rather than tear it down, like they did in Bridgeport, maybe you could, talk about foot traffic. My God. If you got some old factories in there, maybe some small industrial people. The other thing about this Opera House. I don't know, maybe, as a thought, maybe you could do something with local high schools or maybe if you make a center or plays, for high school plays, and let's say I don't know, let's say Shelton came in and they did a play there, then you'd be getting Shelton people to come in, and you'd get Bethany people, because you have a place for their, a professional place for their, for them to put on their show. Maybe,

throw maybe a Karaoke contest, or maybe some talent thing. Maybe that would bring in people.

**Mr. Dimech:** The Opera House has a long history, too. I read whole articles from the Sentinel back in the day, you know, it didn't last as an Opera House for that long, for whatever reason. It turned into a roller skating rink. It turned into a place where the schools had their graduations and all that. It turned into public forum meeting places like this. Around the turn of the century, it was then a police department for a while. You know, it was an Opera House for a very short period of time. But it is a versatile space.

**Mr. Quinn:** But the point is, if you can develop it to bring something, and I just, for the life of me, maybe we, lets say you had Shelton came in, who knows what kind of pull that would be? There's the different people. It doesn't have to be a lot of people. So it has to be some people. And that's the whole idea. You put Target in. A lot of people came in for Target. Big Y, same thing. Maybe this is available, something like that. Maybe people will start making small, big or maybe with this building next door, something like that. Maybe you could develop something like that. But I think really you've got to think about this train and getting it on a regular basis. If you're going to put people in apartments, they've got to have a way to get to New York City and go to work or Stamford to go to work. I mean, Stamford is growing like crazy. I don't want to rent my place to people from Stamford. They're going to get in their car, they got to drive down there, forget it. I mean, but if you can get on the train.

*(inaudible, voices overlapping each other. From what the secretary could make out, they were discussing if and when the trains run.)*

**Mr. St. Angelo:** There is a study going on with a Route 8 train. You may want to check with the Council of Governments in Waterbury and the Valley Council of Governments because there is a study of Route 8. There is a study changing the trains. The problem is that the New Haven line is (inaudible) diesel and they don't mess, merge properly during those sidetracks. There's only one, you sit on that Waterbury Council. Millions and millions of dollars to change it and the bureaucracy is long and very hard to get through. And any developer who wants to go into the community, the hurdles with the new regulations whether it be zoning, wetlands, building, handicap accessible, it's a process.

**Mr. Stoltz:** You're referring to?

**Mr. St. Angelo:** any type of business.

**Mr. Stoltz:** I know that. Ansonia in particular or anywhere?

**Mr. St. Angelo:** Every town you go to, you have to go through the hurdles of all the

commissions. Getting, there are studies just go on to studies. There are studies up and down Route 8. Getting people to come to the Valley towns. Planimetrics just did it for a couple of the towns. There's traffic studies that have studied the study, the study. And again, it looks all fine by all planning commissions but the implementation of finding the dollars. So, there is information out there. Gathering it and then implementing it with new regulations. What was feasible in the 50's, 60's, and 70's and that denotation was in 1967. So you can see the transformation when we had four hardware stores, four clothing stores this on Main Street, a theater. Factory workers, 12 o'clock noon on a Friday, you'd think you were in New York City. Getting factory workers back into Connecticut. (inaudible) Again, deal with what you have. Get the people to now start spending money.

**Mr. Musate:** You need my name?

**Mrs. Sardinha:** Nope I've got it.

**Mr. Musante:** Healey Ford. Do something with that. In terms of an arena or something. We just lost the diner down there on Main Street.

**Mr. Foley:** We didn't just lose it, we lost it a while ago.

*(inaudible many voices overlapping)*

**Mr. Foley:** Anybody's first impression of downtown Main Street is the building near Healey Ford, it burnt down a while ago. That's an eyesore.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Any thoughts, comments?

**Ms. Tara Kolakowski:** Tara Kolakowski, 14 Farrel Drive. I think everyone's has really good points tonight. And everyone's been very passionate about it and it's great to see everyone come out. I think Tony made a great point and the analogy he made in the 1960's there were 3,000 people working in that factory up there and they all spilled onto Main Street. Today, what kind of company can we get to come in? Obviously, we're not going to get 3,000 people, but if we can have the ATP building and the Farrell building come in with companies that will spill onto the streets. That's where it starts. You start with employment.

People, we have the best, logistically, one of the best areas in the state. We're the best commute for almost everywhere. Everyone goes to Fairfield County. Everyone goes across the bridge to Shelton. What's wrong with having people from Fairfield county or Stratford on that edge or Shelton coming into Ansonia. Reverse commute. There is no traffic coming to, to this area. There's no traffic coming out of New Haven to here. It's all going into New Haven. If we can

be a minor metropolis, like New Haven is a major one, where all their businesses are above, their companies are above their retail space, and they spill down below. That's exactly what we're looking for. But we have housing on Main Street. We have retail space available and we have restaurants that are, and businesses that are opening every day, which is a great sign for us. There's not many cities in the state that you have five, six, seven businesses that have opened on Main Street in the past 18 months to 24-month period. We have those and they are sustaining. Yes, we had some close, and the one across the street is very personal to me because it was my brother that closed. So I understand that end of it.

But what I think we need is to start attracting a company that will come in and have one, two, three, four hundred employees that will be here in the day and then talk about it. It's a domino effect. Hey, I work in Ansonia. I never knew there was Crave. I never knew there was this great chocolate shop on the corner, Chez Lollypop. I never knew there was Hot Tamales or Antonio's. There's Only For Her. I never knew those things until I went to work there.

I used to commute to Old Greenwich every day. I never knew Old Greenwich. Oh my God! There's, Old Greenwich is very nice with what they have there and you want to go back for dinner at night or you want to go and shop there during the day and spend some money. Westport is the same thing. SoNo in South Norwalk, they did the same thing. That took many years to come back. South Norwalk. But it didn't happen overnight. That was over a fifteen-year period. And they're thriving again. You have to be careful because if you're on, you could cross the street and you have your life in your hands, but there's a whole four, five, six, seven block radius where it's great to be in South Norwalk, especially along the harbor. That's where you want to get to in the city, but we need to have an anchor business come in and have those employees come in to our town. Not necessarily work in the town, live in the town, and work someplace else. But to have people that live someplace else come in, work in the town and then you create that overflow.

**Mr. Foley:** Can I just say something? The only problem with that though, I think that's great, but every town is looking for the one big company that can come in and bring hundreds of workers in the town. Every town in the Valley, across the state, around the country, try to find that one company that will come in and bring all that. Not that it can't be done, but we have to get pretty lucky in order for that to happen. Which I think, maybe not a competing, at least a supplementary approach has to be to try to develop lots of little companies. Lots of little spaces where people are willing to take a chance or willing to try to branch out and try something new because it's going to be easier to do that here than it would be to do it in a more cut throat environment, like Stamford, like New Haven, like Bridgeport, right. That there's going to be more support, more infrastructure, more help from people in the community around to do that. I...

**Ms. Kolakowski:** That's a great point, but I think we can accommodate both. We can accommodate a company that can have 100 or 200. I owned by own business. I employed 20 people. I just sold it in August. We can have that group that employs 20 to 100, but we can also reach for the 100, the 200. We have a tremendous amount of possibility in our city to accommodate anyone that comes in. Hey, you've got someone that want to take and (inaudible) and employ 200 people, we have a space for you. If we have someone that, I have about 25 (inaudible), we have a space for you. That's what's great about Ansonia is we have those spaces and right now we're in the infancy to develop any, anything for anyone. So it is a great plan. I didn't try to, niche it just to that big one, but open it up to everyone because right now we can, we can birth that.

**Alderman John Marini:** Tara's right. There's a lot of potential that all people don't see. I'm talking about factory buildings being a big challenge, but in truth, that's actually probably our competitive edge. The same land that right now holds a vacant factory buildings and unused buildings, that's the space for the downtown community development. That's the area that other towns don't have. Once that problem is squared away, and obviously there are problems to be taken care of, the environmental cleanup, the renovations of the buildings, possibly taking some buildings down, but once those problems are cleared, it's honestly, it's ideal for development. It's the potential to make an entirely new downtown area. That's something other towns don't have. As an advantage right now, that's buried. We have to figure out though how we're going to overcome the obstacles to get to that sort of pot of gold.

**Mr. Stoltz:** And also as you've said that the last four plus or minus years, have been terrible across the United States, across Connecticut, etc. etc., a lot of these opportunities have come up over that period of time, not that it didn't happen, but it's a backdrop that (inaudible)

**Mr. Dave Knapp:** Dave Knapp, 3 Glen Drive, I think, When you look at Shelton, Shelton's success was the Route 8 corridor. And I think Ansonia's future is going to depend on the Pershing Drive/Wakelee Avenue accessibility to the Route 8 corridor. I'm surprised that Beacon Falls never has taken advantage. You go up to Beacon Falls, I'm surprised that they've never taken advantage of it by Route 8. Maybe it's a sign of the times with the economy, but I think the accessibility, I think the train, I think we can utilize, we have to do something trying to get them on a schedule. But I think accessibility to the Pershing Drive, you know, make it a gateway to Ansonia or Wakelee Avenue. I don't think we'll go crazy with the idea of more traffic, but that's the name of the game. And I would like to talk to what Tara said, when I was a kid growing up here and Farrell's, not to correct Tara, but I think they had 12-15,000 people working there and at noontime or 3:30, you couldn't cross the street over there. Those days I don't think are going to happen, but like I said I think you've got to get the traffic coming through, not around us. The gentleman, over there, waterfront property, those housing projects come down, I think that's prime real estate, tied in to condos, for the single yuppies that you're looking to

attract.

**Mr. Quinn:** Dennis Quinn, Holbrook, I was just thinking. What you should do probably is find out where the parking is and all the railroad stations and I believe back up there, I don't know if the car dealer owns all that, but this, you should have, but you point out where the parking is very obviously to make it easy for people to find a place to park and then come out. The other thing I'm thinking is it sounds to me like what we need here is a commercial real estate person, with all the talk about factories and businesses. You should have a commercial real estate person here too.

**Mr. Stoltz:** When you say here, what do you mean?

**Mr. Quinn:** In the meeting. I mean maybe, I don't know it seems to me a commercial real estate person is who we need, not, what am I saying? I'm not saying not you, plus you.

**Mr. Stoltz:** We do commercial real estate.

**Mr. Quinn:** Oh okay. I thought you were just a planner. That's fine.

**Mr. Musante:** Edward Musante, 21 Castle Lane, Farrell's still has there (inaudible) operated by the town of Seymour. It's not empty.

**Mr. St. Angelo:** For the short term, Route 8 in the morning, you can't get there from here. If there's an accident on the bridge, the cars do not know that Ansonia is, if you're going by Route 8 and there's a football game, and or in the morning, the backup in traffic, you try and find the side roads, you come off. There needs to be some type of communications to give the people that are on Route 8, to get them off of Route 8. The mentality of the American people today is drive thru, grab and go, whenever I park my car, and go to work, I'll go to the dry cleaners, I'll go to grab a sandwich. After hours, how do we get them off of Route 8, whether they're going North or South? The signage initially is to say, "We have businesses in town where you could spend your money, you don't have to pay \$20 to park in New Haven. You can come here, parking is plentiful in Ansonia. We have parking lots than businesses I think.

**Mr. Foley:** Jim Foley, 80 Garden Street, I think part of it, is creating a really welcoming climate for businesses and for visitors. So, for example, I get pretty much all of my news online. And so one of the things that I notice is I didn't find out that the new restaurant had opened, the new sushi restaurant had opened down on Main Street until I drove by, by accident. How did I not know that sushi restaurant was opening on Main Street in Ansonia? That was the highlight of my year so far. Really. Every weekend at my house, it's either pizza, McDonalds or KFC, right and it's terrible. I love sushi. I love the fact that Antonio's is opened, that Crave is opened,

Lanza's is opened. These are all destination restaurants and yet I don't know that thing was broadcasted to anybody beyond our immediate community.

So, I want to hear from the mayor. I want to hear from the Aldermen. I want to hear from the representatives when stuff is new and exciting is happening. The most that I find out about what is going on in Ansonia is from the Valley Independent Sentinel and unfortunately, most of what they've had to report lately is bad. So, I want Mayor James DellaVolpe to friend me on Facebook. I want the city of Ansonia to friend me on Facebook. I want people to be sharing anything that's new and exciting, to not just me, because when they share it with me, people are going to see it in my network of friends out there, people with, all through the Valley, all through Waterbury. I want people to know that, as they're driving by Route 8, they can stop in for a great lunch and some shopping around the area.

I feel like, I'm hesitant to say this because I'm not quite sure it's going to come out, but I moved to Ansonia 12 years ago. I'm not even from the state of Connecticut. What my impression was, I think it's gotten a lot better since I've been here, but my impression was that Ansonia and a lot of the neighboring communities here in the Valley were not terribly welcoming to newcomers at first. That's what I'll say in the beginning. I think it has changed for the better quite a bit, but I have anecdotal evidence of people that I know who work in Ansonia who have not found it as easy to do some of the things that they thought would be easy to do. As somebody opening businesses in the town. I don't know whether that's because they didn't know the right people or they just want to do business people or what. But I can say that I think that as a city we can do a much better job of trying to be as welcoming to all people that we want to come and visit and live here and open up businesses here as we possibly can. We have to be able to do a better job. And I think we can.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Other thoughts, comments?

**Mr. St. Angelo:** Main Street for the last 30 days has been a mess as far as the water lines and everything else. There was no communication to local businessmen that it was going to happen before it shut down any of the merchants. We called Town Hall to say, "What's going on? How come you shut the street down? There was no communication to the businesses on Main Street that Main Street was going to be having all this construction. So again, it goes back to the communications of the City and that's a major problem because we do not have a local newspaper anymore and how do you communicate with people that have been in the community? We need to do that. You know. Everybody talks about Shelton. Bridgeport Avenue, downtown Shelton, is okay. You talk to the people in Huntington, they don't even know where downtown Shelton is. It's getting the people to spend their dollars and let them know what you have here. They think, they thought (inaudible) cheaper, with a gallon of gas going \$4 and rising, you're going to go the Boston Post Road, it will cost you \$10, \$15 to get

there and back. To save what? Thirty cents? It's getting the word out to the public.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Just by a show of hands, how many people leave the local area on a regular basis? This whole side here. (*almost everyone raised their hands*). Good.

**Ms. Gonzalez:** We used to get the Valley Gazette. It used to come out every week. But now you have to pay for that so anyone could read the Valley Gazette online or the Valley Independent Sentinel.

**Mr. Kreiger:** Howie Kreiger, Spector Furniture, that is a great point. One of the biggest problems that the residents, I think all of us have come across. Whether you're on Wakelee Avenue or Main Street, there's no direct newspaper that goes into the homes. The Valley Gazette used to go into every home. They went down in circulation to about 16,000. Now I believe they are in the vicinity of 2,000. The Connecticut Post is still out in this area. The New Haven Register is out in this area. Aside from really cable, there's not, there's really not a whole lot of communication that's local. And that's a big problem. What's going on with?

**Mr. Stoltz:** What kind of advertising do you do, may I ask?

**Mr. Kreiger:** Firstly, we advertise a lot in the Connecticut Post. Keeping in mind that I'm a larger ticket item s people tend to drive further distances for me. We are in the process right now of running some, doing some commercials for cable. We're talking about (inaudible) it disappeared, but I do some in local papers and

**Mr. Stoltz:** When you say cable, cable TV? Not the local community?

**Mr. Kreiger:** No. HGTV, some network.. And that's our, and direct mail. We do some direct mail. Our website on the internet.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Okay. Yes?

**Mr. Charlie Stowe:** Charlie Stowe, 23 Granite Terrace. I'd like to support some of the ideas that people gave here tonight. You know the second stories above our storefronts is definitely a keen thing to do. And I don't know if we could get people living there as a mixed use and having them go shopping. Get a cup of coffee. Go down Main Street so if you can have any help with having a newspaper again. That's the kind of thing that makes a newspaper where people go down and sit on the curb and have a cup of coffee before they get on the train. I really, I didn't know about the complications with the electric train and all that. Your work is going to be cut out for you Dick. There's a lot of businesses that I know feel the same exact way as what's going on here. They're not here tonight and I wish that a lot of them were able to be here.

They are in a similar circumstance and I think a lot of us are guilty of this. I was on at a job today and they were telling me, "Please stay late, please stay late. You can stay as long as you want. Try and finish it." You want to finish them. You know, there was a time in my life when that's all I did. A lot of people are doing that. When they do that, they're not able to help in their own society, with input or work together as a community. The way the economy is, its making it all that much harder because people are trying to work all the time. But anyway, there's a lot of people that I wish were here. I've heard their stories. They're similar to the people that are here. If we can get these people together, these land owners or the people that own the buildings that these businesses are in, because they want their buildings (inaudible). We've got to get them involved. They have got to participate. But, we have to do that.

**Mr. Stoltz:** Other comments? I want to thank you all very much. This has been extraordinarily helpful. I hope you've gotten a lot of things off your chest today. This has been very, very useful and I think, and I don't know whether and of you saw the announcements, but they have my email address also. I will give that to you now if you want it. If there's any thoughts that you wanted to get across but didn't express tonight. I hope you all have something to write with, but it's [res.bandc@snet.net](mailto:res.bandc@snet.net). And I welcome any further comments that you have. And again I appreciate you coming tonight. We are going to put together a plan as implementable it's going to stretch Ansonia, but not stretch it so it breaks. Evoke some thought and hopefully make a difference. Thank you very much.

(The meeting ended at 8:15.)

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Sardinha  
Secretary

\* <http://artspace.info/>

\*\* <http://makerfaire.com/>

§ <http://hackerspaces.org/wiki/>