

TOWN OF ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES
Selectmen's Room
Ashford Town Hall
WEDNESDAY, July 26, 2023
7:30pm

Present: T. Wakeman, J. Calarese , M. Chatey (Acting Chair), R. Fenn

Absent:, J. Rettenmeier, M. Gantick, R. Ignatowicz, Alternates Fontaine and Olson

Guests: First Selectman Bill Falletti

The meeting lacked a quorum so no official business was acted on

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Seating of Alternates-none**
3. **Approval of Minutes – April 26 Meeting** – lacked quorum for vote
4. **Budget-no update**
5. **Communications and Announcements**
 - a. Announcements/Presentations-
 - i. I-84 proposal update-moratorium on property enacted by PZC
 - ii. Question raised about Moore property and its cleanup and whether there is action being taken to market it.
 - b. News from Other Commissions
 - i. Agriculture Commission is considering a “Meet Your Farmer” gathering to be held Friday, September 8 at Westford Hill Distillers. Open to the public to promote familiarity and what products are available. Awaiting confirmation.
 - ii. Selectman Bill Falletti provided updates on several key areas impacting EDC:

CadleRock: Town will be working with a student group from Yale who will assess support such as specifically mapping wetlands, etc, and provide proposals for what the land might accommodate. To apply for grants, the Town needs to present specific plans. Area is about 354 acres, with 44 in Willington. Cost to finish cleanup is about \$300,000. Town has invested about \$1.5 million on the project so far. Interest expressed about extensive bike trails by one organization as a recreational destination. Discussion about need to include tax revenue-generating element to the multi-usage plans.

Restaurants: Midway Restaurant future is still uncertain. Owners are meeting this week with fire marshal about reconstruction and building codes, including sprinklers. Great demand for restaurant services. EDC shared it is working with owner of the former Tavern/Sneakers space to attract restaurants.

ARPA for Businesses: Discussion about how to use ARPA funds to support businesses beyond the relief program proposed by AEDC. Board of Selectmen to review proposal from AEDC and finalize application. Ashford EDC (subcommittee) willing to be involved in promoting and mailing applications to businesses and reviewing for BoS.

Moore Property: Discussion about the 2.05 acres. No specific plan to market it. EDC discussed how it had supported marketing efforts previously. R. Fenn will draft a letter providing background and urging BoS to consider putting that land up for sale so it might become tax revenue-producing.

Other Town News: Ashford Farmers' Market will be adding a winter market starting in December. Hope and Wellness is expanding its business space. The Ashford Senior Center will host an antique car show in the fall (tourism). Discussion about tourism center.

Financial situation: In preparation for school roofing project, getting ready to go out to Bond. Ashford's rating is Aa3 (2013). Town considered stable; financially conservative with modest debt. However, challenges include the small tax base with limited projected growth. Households are cost-burdened. Discussion about the 93% burden on residential/property taxes and 7% from business revenue. Need to build business revenue.

10. Adjournment Adjourned 9:35 PM

Submitted by M. Chatey, Acting Chair