

**TOWN OF ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES
Downstairs Conference Room
Ashford Town Hall
WEDNESDAY, December 20, 2023
7:30pm**

Present: M. Gantick, R. Ignatowicz, T. Wakeman, M. Chatey (Acting Chair), R. Fenn

Absent:, J. Rettenmeier, J. Calarese, Alternates Fontaine and Olson

Guests: N. Thaller

1. **Call to Order** at 7:30 pm
2. **Seating of Alternates-none**
3. **Approval of Minutes** – September 27, 2023. Motion by T. Wakeman, B. Ignatowicz second. Approved
4. **Budget-Expenditures** reported total \$509.34 of the \$1950 budget. Invoice for printing of ARPA mailing elements still not received from Anything Printed. Discussion about submitting for 2024-25 budget request, and agreed to submit for \$2,500, an increase of \$550 in anticipation of more activity, especially related to promoting tourism activity here. Check EDC ordinance to confirm funding formula stated. Discussed need to find an active website administrator for EDC.
5. **Communications and Announcements**
 - a. Announcements/Presentations-
 - i. First Selectman C. Silver-Smith has requested an informal overview of the Commission’s accomplishments and goals, and wants to discuss opportunities. She is also interested in Town hiring a grant consultant to help access resources available through grants.
 - ii. Review of 2024 proposed meeting dates. Commission accepted as proposed.
 - b. News from Other Commissions.
 - i. Acknowledged to Solid Waste Advisory Chair Wakeman that the Transfer Station changes are very positive.
 - c. Correspondence and Meetings
 - i. OTOF: Request by OTOF to fund \$50 toward a listing in The Last Green Valley guide to promote website, AshfordCTOutdoors.org., sharing cost with Rec Dept. M. Gantick made motion, B. Ignatowicz seconded, approved.
 - ii. News about Ashford businesses. Midway Restaurant- R. Ignatowicz will try to make contact. Hope and Wellness has completed its expansion into adjoining space. Horse Listener’s Orchard property has sold to B. Lacey of Mansfield and it’s believed it will return to the former name, Crooke’s Orchard. M. Chatey to make contact to offer any assistance.
6. **Old Business**
 - a. Status-letters to Selectpersons-no report. M. Chatey to edit and submit
 - b. EDC Marketing and Communications
 - i. Active Business Lists – no report

- ii. Tourism Activity-R. Ignatowicz attended Eastern Region Tourism District and discussion about which three tourism attractions should be submitted for Ashford: Westford Hill Distillers, Brialee, Trails through the website AshfordCTOutdoors.org. Horse Listener's/Crookes Orchard would be another if it were still in operation as a farm stand/orchard destination. ERTD will provide support on social media and with influencers, photography etc. to promote the region, Scenic Northeast. Followup meetings with Woodstock and Pomfret representatives to discuss collaborations such as the Connecticut Path, cemetery tours.
- c. ARPA Grants to businesses-Subcommittee of T. Wakeman, B. Ignatowicz, R. Fenn, (and contact J. Calarese) to review the 18 applications received from businesses. Agreed to meet January 10 at 9 AM.
- d. Restaurant strategy-no report
- e. POCD – no report
- f. EDC Website
 - i. Replacement for staff-M. Chatey corresponding with an individual, will follow up for story research
- g. Election of officers-tabled
- h. New member recruitment- N. Thaller close to being official member.

7. New Business

- a. Input to PZC about I-84 Zoning Regs - M. Gantic reported on conversation with property owner about potential next steps and usage. Discussion about appropriate types of operations, such as light commercial that already exists there. Agreed that it is a suitable area for commercial development as outlined in 2005 and 2015 Town-approved Plans of Conservation and Development, and regulations should not limit optimum use with direct access to high-traffic counts and direct access to I-84. Concern for longevity of businesses that site there. Regs should allow for flexibility. Survey about the property in place through December 31, and all encouraged to complete. M. Chatey and M. Gantick to work on drafting input to PZC.
- 8. Input from Public-none
- 9. Member Input for Next Agenda-none

10. Adjournment Adjourned 9:25 PM

Submitted by M. Chatey, Acting Chair

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 24, 2024 at 7:30 PM