

**TOWN OF SALEM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2024, 6:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL, CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Melissa Beers, Chairperson
Michael Smith
Amanda Lawrence
Timothy Whitehouse (New Commissioner)

ABSENT

John Houchin, Vice Chairperson
Kathleen Roderick

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RECEIVED
TOWN OF SALEM, CT
Julie Roderick

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Beers called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Chairperson Beers introduced new commissioner Whitehouse and mentioned that Commissioner Roderick would be switching over to an alternate. She also mentioned that Kristin Kiczuk may be joining the commission as an alternate.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES:

a. Tuesday, November 21, 2023, Regular Meeting

Discussion: Commissioner Beers asked to Remove "Salem-based" from the minutes as it was not strictly Salem Businesses that participated in the event

8b. Vendor Update 'Forty-two (42) Salem-based businesses' to Forty-two (42) ~~Salem-based~~ businesses'

M/S/C: Beers/Smith, to approve the November 21, 2023, Economic Development Commission Regular Meeting Minutes. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor.

3. CORRESPONDENCE

No update from Martha Marx.

Information regarding the Commission's Small Business Saturday event was shared with State Representatives Cheeseman and Haines. First Selectman Ed Chmielewski saw them at an event yesterday. It was a great networking experience. They conversed about ways to help enhance Salem businesses.

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski also mentioned that he would like to enhance the Our Town quarterly magazine publication with more vendors. The goal is to get more information in the

publication and tighten up the dates and meet deadlines. Also want to help recognize our small businesses.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS – none

5. SALEM BUSINESS

Chairperson Beers mentioned that there were a few new businesses in town. A boutique, nail salon, and another business in the plaza. Dunkin Donuts had a makeover. Subway is under new ownership.

6. SALEM BUSINESS OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

- a. In-Person Outreach – Chairperson Beers suggested reaching out to Unicorn Nails and welcoming them to town. Commissioner Lawrence stated she already did. She showed the owner Kevin the Our Town magazine, explained how to place ads, and offered to help him with social media advertising and any other help he might need.
- b. Welcome Packet – Link on website? Chairperson Beers is unable to find it on the website. She gets a 404-error message.

7. SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

Overall successful event. Over 500 attendees. One vendor left early and caused a little bit of disruption. Commissioner Smith said we might need more screening in the future. Added \$68 in donations to the benevolent fund from donations for the 'Selfie's with Santa' booth.

A couple of improvements are needed for next year.

- a. The venue got cold towards the end. Some ideas that were discussed by Commissioner Smith involved asking Burnette's to turn on the heat and we could pay them for the heat by charging vendors for the event. Commissioner Whitehouse mentioned he was only cold for the last two hours. All commissioners agreed they were not too cold as all were busy and moving around a lot. Commissioner Smith said he fears changing to an earlier end time, like 10-2PM instead of 4 PM as that may cause traffic to slow even earlier. The Commissioners discussed charging out-of-town businesses for vendor spaces and not Salem or charging out-of-towners more than Salem businesses in the future. Since we have ARPA funds to use, it would be free for Salem businesses to participate again this year. Need to start thinking about Christmas in July and the possibility of getting a fund for the Economic Development Commission. Chairperson Beers will ask First Selectmen Ed Chmielewski to change this. As of now we do not have a fund for revenue. Chairperson Beers will talk to Agnes about taking in money like the Recreation Commission does.

- b. A couple vendors refused to stamp the passport unless the patrons made a purchase. Commissioner Smith said we may need to change that next year. Chairperson Beers and Commissioner Smith suggested a scavenger hunt.
- c. We sent out an electronic Survey Monkey survey to vendors and had a poor return rate. Not as poor as the paper surveys from Christmas in July event, but still not a good return.

8. BUDGET UPDATE

A Budget Update of the Commission's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) is \$5,206.53 (no increase) The town budget for Economic Development Commission is \$1,500.00 – Some is going to the Our Town Publication as agreed upon previously. No voting on anything tonight since it is a Special Meeting.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Carl Nawrocki of Music Vale Rd. and President of The Friends of Salem Library attended the meeting on behalf of many town non-profits to discuss the need for increased community communication and collaboration. The goal is to increase cooperation and communication among all and brainstormed ideas with the commissioners.

It was mentioned that Facebook is no longer a useful source of information unless ads are paid for. There seems to be a disconnect in the town with getting information out to the townspeople and different organizations.

Mr. Nawrocki stated that there were two separate events on the green for the annual Christmas festivities when there could have been only one if there had been collaboration. He mentioned the following as sources of communication and was hoping the commission had some more ideas. He suggested something like the Bozrah TWIB "This week in Bozrah" but was not sure if it was on the town website or if it was a Facebook page. Will try to find out.

- a. Salem Town Facebook page is a useful source (Private citizens post, not a town run page) The group discussed that while it is a good source of information, there is also a lot of scam artists on Facebook and the need for administrators so cautioned Mr. Nawrocki about the pages.
- b. Salem School's Wednesday Folder a useful source
- c. The Day and other local papers are not helpful in town because there are too few subscribers.
- d. Our Town quarterly newsletters. Could be good but currently not good because of deadline issues and late publications.

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski joined the discussion and mentioned that all non-profits must be treated the same and there are limitations to what the town can do to support them. He added that to the best of the town's ability he would like to collaborate and communicate information.

The group discussed a community calendar, volunteers, and future collaboration. Mr. Nawrocki will put out request for calendar of items. Need to plan. He mentioned the word PERSERVERANCE and will continue to work on this. Chairperson Beers asked to be kept in the loop.

2024 Goals: Chairperson Beers asked the commissioners to think about the goals for 2024 that they would like to see. She mentioned we need to get back on track with Planning and Zoning for new businesses in town. Put some thought into it. How can we support new and existing businesses?

10. OLD BUSINESS

Chairperson Beers asked Commissioner Lawrence to send her the Business Recognition flyer to her again so that we can discuss the next meeting and get the information out in the OUR TOWN newsletter.

11. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Smith/Whitehouse, to adjourn the meeting at 7:17 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Amanda Lawrence, Commissioner, Economic Development Commission