

**TOWN OF SALEM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024, 6:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL, CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Melissa Beers, Chairperson
Tim Whitehouse
Michael Smith

ABSENT

John Houchin, Vice Chairperson
Amanda Lawrence
Kristen Pugatch
Kathleen Roderick, Alt

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Julie A. Stoker

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Beers called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES:

a. Wednesday, January 24, 2024 Special Meeting

M/S/C: Smith/Whitehouse, to approve the January 24, 2024 Economic Development Commission Special Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 3-0, all in favor.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

- a. Update from Senator Martha Marx – *no update*
- b. Update from State Representatives Holly Cheeseman and Irene Haines – *no update; currently in Legislative Session*
- c. Update from Salem First Selectman Ed Chmielewski
Chairperson Beers reported that she met with the First Selectman to discuss various matters, including the Commission's proposed FY2024/25 Budget and FY2022/23 Annual Report submission. The First Selectman stated that he is excited about the Commission's upcoming activities and their collaborative efforts. He will assist her in investigating the State Representatives for Bozrah, Montville, and Colchester to collaborate for funding. He also plans to attend the March 7 Small Business Breakfast meeting. They also discussed the quality of the past two directories; Chairperson Beers will contact the vendor for the first directory and CCM (Connecticut Conference of Municipalities) and Commissioner Smith will contact INK Magazine for guidance.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS – *none*

Chairperson Beers introduced Deb White, who attended the recent Small Business Breakfast Gathering for neighboring community businesses. The Commission will be hosting its next Gathering on March 7, 2024, from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m.

6. SALEM BUSINESS

Chairperson Beers reported that she met with *Unicorn Nails & Spa*, a popular and well-received new business, and discussed the possibility of engaging with *Our Town Salem* and/or hosting a Grand Opening event.

6. SALEM BUSINESS OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

a. In-Person Outreach

As previously noted, a Small Business Breakfast Gathering, hosted by *Your Business Solution, LLC*, a business consulting firm that helps businesses network with each other and gain recognition, was held at the *2 Sisters Trading Post* in February.

b. Welcome Packet – no update

7. BUDGET UPDATE

Chairperson Beers presented the Commission's budget request for FY2024/25, which includes an increase from \$1,500.00 to \$5,000.00 primarily to help fund the cost of producing and publishing an updated Business Directory and promotional costs for their events. The Commission's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds are nearly expended. Commissioner Smith added that, while they have been frugal with their expenses, they will not be able to sustain their efforts without a budget increase or charging their vendors.

M/S/C: Smith/Whitehouse, to approve the proposed FY2024/25 Economic Development Commission budget of \$5,000.00. Discussion: Commissioner Smith stated that the amount is based on the funds that were previously expended. Voice vote, 3-0, all in favor.

8. NEW BUSINESS

The Commission discussed changing the date of the Christmas in July event to the Saturday following the Fourth of July to attract those who frequent the campgrounds and in hopes of cooler weather. Chairperson Beers also raised the possibility of hosting the event with the Recreation Commission again and/or the town's non-profit organizations to help share some of the responsibilities and create a more well-rounded event. Commissioner Smith concurred, adding that any additional attractions to attract more people to the event would be beneficial. The Commissioners agreed to revisit the date change during their March Regular Meeting.

9. 2024 GOALS

The Commissioners discussed the items they would like the Commission to accomplish this year.

Commissioner Smith stated that he would like the Commissioners to pursue a study to increase the number of small brick & mortar businesses in town, including working with the Planning & Zoning Commission to identify areas within their regulations that would improve and make the town more inviting to businesses, especially those that the townspeople would like to see in town, including food trucks. Ms. White added the possibility of establishing an “Incubator Kitchen”, an affordable, shared certified kitchen space for food preparation for small food businesses. Examples include *CLiCK, Inc. Food Hub*, Windham; *Hands On Hartford*, Hartford, and; *Hope & Main*, Warren, RI. Another option is to establish a “Ghost Kitchen”, which focuses on selling and fulfilling online food orders for delivery using third-party apps.

Commissioner Whitehouse stated that he would like to see a section on the website that guides prospective businesses on how to properly start a business in town. It was noted that Commissioner Houchin helped create a draft webpage; the link will be sent to the Commission.

Chairperson Beers would like to continue to support the town’s small businesses and create a network with their surrounding towns to increase their funding and promotional opportunities.

The Business Spotlight initiative, which is being spearheaded by Commissioner Lawrence, will be discussed during their March Regular Meeting. Discussion ensued regarding the *Our Town Salem* deadlines to promote the initiative. Chairperson Beers stated that First Selectman Chmielewski informed her that the deadlines can be adjusted, if necessary.

10. OLD BUSINESS – none

Chairperson Beers provided a copy of the Parliamentary Procedure for Meetings to the Commissioners, for their information.

Ms. White, who also serves as a Board Member of the Norwich Chamber of Commerce, questioned how the Chamber could better assist the town. She reported that the Chamber is planning to rebrand itself to reflect all of the towns it represents. She invited everyone to attend a monthly Business After Hours event, which is open to the public, and noted that it is not necessary to be a member to take advantage of most of their events and training sessions. She encouraged the Commissioners to view their online calendar. She also reported that Norwich Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Angela Adams plans to meet with and reach out to all of their representative towns’ First Selectman or Mayor.

11. ADJOURNMENT

**M/S/C: Smith/Whitehouse, to adjourn the meeting at 6:57 p.m. Discussion: None.
Voice vote, 3-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Salem