

**TOWN OF SALEM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2021 – 8:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Edward Chmielewski, Jr., Chairman
Carl Fontneau
Steven Shelley

ABSENT

none

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Chmielewski called the meeting to order at 8:30 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. ADDITIONS/MODIFICATIONS TO AGENDA – *none*

3. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

M/S/C: Fontneau/Shelley, to approve the February 17, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 3-0, all in favor.

4. CORRESPONDENCE – *none*

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS – *none*

6. SALEM BUSINESS AND COVID-19 IMPACT

a. Update from Senator Paul Formica

b. Update from State Representative Holly Cheeseman

Senator Formica and Representative Cheeseman thanked the Chairman for allowing them to provide a brief update to the Commission.

Senator Formica reported on his recent participation in a conversation with the League of Women Voters and Congressman Jim Himes regarding resolutions that have been presented to the legislators to expand absentee and early voting. Other discussions included finance and tax matters and the single-parent insurance option. The Governor's Emergency Powers will expire on April 19 and many of the Executive Orders will also expire unless they are codified by State Statute.

Representative Cheeseman reported on the bills which were presented and begin discussed at this evening's Public Hearing. The most controversial bills being discussed include Senate Bill 171, which would place a 1% property tax for homes with an assessed value of over \$300,000.00 and commercial properties, and Senate Bill 172, which would place a 1% tax on all properties should the town not have achieved the 10% affordable housing threshold. The funds would be directed to distressed cities. The Governor has made it clear that he does not plan to sign any tax increases. The Legislator is now asserting its authority and has expressed the need for all of the members to be involved in the Police Accountability Bill and the allocation of the Federal funds that are expected to be received by the State. She has presented a bill allowing small businesses to apply for a tax credit for any COVID-19-related upgrades.

Commissioner Fontneau reported that the Planning & Zoning Commission, of which he is also a member, is currently working on the town's Affordable Housing Plan. He stated the unlikely possibility that the town would be able to meet the State's Affordable Housing goals due to its lack of public water and sewer. Representative Cheeseman agreed that there are issues with the State mandate and felt that, while there are creative ways to meet the mandate, it is very difficult for small rural towns that do not have the infrastructure to meet the State requirements. Commissioner Fontneau added that, while there are properties that would meet the affordable housing requirements, they do not meet the State's definition and, therefore, do not qualify.

The Senator and Representative thanked the Commission for their hard work and encouraged them to contact them with any questions and/or concerns they might have; the Commissioners thanked them for their time and efforts.

The Commissioners briefly discussed the negative effects that the proposed bills would have on the property owners and businesses in the town.

c. Update from Salem First Selectman Kevin Lyden

First Selectman Lyden continues to reach out to the town's businesses and residents as they do their best to work hard and stay open during these difficult times. Chairman Chmielewski commended the First Selectman for keeping the Town Hall staff safe as they continue to serve the public.

7. CT OFFICE OF TOURISM

a. EASTERN REGION TOURISM DISTRICT UPDATE

Chairman Chmielewski reported that the Board of Directors continues to meet and discuss ways to bring tourism to Eastern Connecticut. He opened the possibility of one of the Commissioners serving on the Board, should they be interested in increasing their involvement.

9. EDC BUSINESS & SERVICE DIRECTORY 2021

Commissioner Shelley distributed the production options and associated pricing for the Directory. He has also contacted *The Chronicle*, who produces the *Colchester Town Guide* for the *Colchester Business Association*, and received the advertising and production/printing costs. The advertising cost would increase by approximately 150% and the publication would cost the town approximately \$1,000.00. He will be meeting with the publisher this week to discuss the details, other pricing and/or sizing options, and receive a sample copy of the directory.

10. SENIOR-FRIENDLY / AGE-RESTRICTED HOUSING DISCUSSION

Construction for the age-restricted housing development on Route 82 has begun. Chairman Chmielewski proposed the possibility of arranging a tour of the property for both the Commission and the Salem Seniors in the near future.

11. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD)

Commissioner Fontneau plans to present the following objectives to the Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) for inclusion in the town's POCD on behalf of the Commission:

- Changing the zoning of those parcels currently zoned as Industrial be changed to Highway Commercial. He presented the town's Zoning Map to the Commission, which reflects its current zoning areas. There are currently very few properties located within Industrial Zone that are conducive to commercial developments, due to its limited availability or terrain; changing the zoning would make them more amenable to inviting businesses to develop the land for commercial purposes.
- The PZC, through the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG), is currently working on the town's Affordable Housing Plan which will be included in the POCD as an appendix. Simultaneously, he volunteered to work on the Housing section of the POCD for which he plans to gather more detailed information regarding the town's housing stock.
- Conduct a cottage industry cluster analysis in which businesses are contacted for their possible interest in connecting and supporting each other.

He looks forward to hearing any additional ideas the Commission might have to present to the PZC for inclusion in the town's POCD.

12. SALEM BUSINESS OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

a. Electronic Survey (Commissioner Shelley)

Commissioner Shelley distributed the survey for review and reported that he has compiled a list of e-mail addresses of the town's businesses. While the initial purpose of the survey was to gauge their interests in purchasing ads for their upcoming directory, Chairman Chmielewski now views the survey as a means of gathering the

business owners together and building a camaraderie, e.g., a coalition, advisory panel, or the like. Given the recent developments for the publication of the Directory, discussion ensued regarding the exclusion of some of the questions, including questions 4, 8, and 9, and the inclusion of others that are directed towards gauging their interest in getting more involved. Commissioner Shelley will send the Commission a draft of the introduction to the Directory.

b. In-Person Outreach (Commissioner Shelley)

Chairman Chmielewski, who recently visited the 1 New London Road Plaza, showed recent photographs, which depicted overflowing garbage cans and trash strewn on the ground.

c. Welcome Packet (Commissioner Fontneau)

Commissioner Fontneau developed a rough draft of the Welcome Packet, which includes the necessary steps for one to establish a business in the town.

13. NEW BUSINESS – *none*

14. OLD BUSINESS – *none*

15. ADJOURNMENT

**M/S/C: Shelley/Fontneau, to adjourn the meeting at 9:59 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