

TOWN OF SALEM
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Salem Town Hall, Conference Room 1

PRESENT

Steven Shelley, Chairman
Carl Fontneau
John Houchin

ABSENT

Melissa Beers
Victoria Knopf
John Gilbert, Alternate
Alexandra Marsh, Alternate

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Shelley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ALTERATIONS TO THE AGENDA

M/S/C: Fontneau/Houchin, to add the following item to the Agenda:

**2. State Project No. 0085-0146, Route 85 Improvement Virtual Public
Information Meeting**

Discussion: None. Voice vote, 3-0, all in favor.

**2. STATE PROJECT NO. 0085-0146, ROUTE 85 IMPROVEMENT VIRTUAL
PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING**

The Commissioners viewed a portion of the Virtual Public Information Meeting regarding the State's Route 85 Road Improvement Project. The project, which begins on Route 85 just south of Route 82 and extends just south of Route 161, includes the Towns of Montville and Salem and will be divided into four (4) sections. Sections 1 and 2 are located within the Town of Salem. The overall purpose of the project is to improve traffic operations, increase shoulder width to a minimum of 5', and provide left-turn bypass lanes. Section 1 of the project will include improvements to sightlines and the replacement of the Fraser Brook Bridge to accommodate design storm flows. Section 2 of the project will provide consistent lane and shoulder widths.

Section 1 of the project will begin just south of the Route 82/85 Roundabout and extend to approximately one mile south of Horse Pond Road. In 2019, it was estimated that approximately 13,000 vehicles travel along Route 85, north of Forsyth Road, daily, at a speed of 49 to 54 miles per hour (40 to 50 mph, posted speed limit). A total of 21 crashes,

most of which occurred at the intersections of Woodland Drive and Forsyth Road, have been recorded between July 2018 and June 2021. The shoulders in this section will be widened five to eight feet and Fraser Brook Bridge, located just west of Woodland Drive, will be replaced. The span of the bridge will be lengthened to accommodate design storm flows. To minimize the impact on the existing wetlands, the bridge will be widened to the east. The widening of the shoulders will allow vehicles to bypass those who are turning left on Forsyth Road.

Section 2 of the project will begin near the picnic area across from Burnett's Country Gardens and extend to just south of Valley Drive. The average daily traffic in 2019 was estimated at 14,000 vehicles per day with prevailing speeds of 51 to 54 mph and a posted speed limit of 45 mph. A total of 7 crashes have been recorded between July 2018 and June 2021. The primary improvement along this segment is the widening of the shoulder widths by a minimum of 5 feet and a maximum of 8 feet. Approximately five years ago, the Department of Transportation initiated a construction project to improve the site distances of Butlertown Road and Skyline Drive.

Chairman Shelley expressed his hopes that the Project will have a positive impact on the economy and businesses in the town.

3. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

M/S/C: Fontneau/Houchin, to approve the February 15, 2022 Economic Development Commission Special 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**
- c. Update from Salem First Selectman Ed Chmielewski**

Commissioner Houchin expressed the possibility of inquiring about any upcoming legislation that could impact the town's business outlook.

7. CT OFFICE OF TOURISM

a. EASTERN REGION TOURISM DISTRICT UPDATE

The Eastern Region Tourism District agreed to update the boundary lines, dividing the area into three, rather than two. The update will also realign the distribution of funding. Salem is included in "Destination 2", which includes the towns of Bozrah, Norwich, Montville, East

Lyme, Waterford, and New London. The Commissioners were encouraged to forward any suggestions for names for the area to the Chairman for consideration.

8. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD)

Commissioner Fontneau reported that the Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed and discussed the submitted draft. He expressed some of his concerns with the input provided by one of the Planning & Zoning Commissioners. Commissioner Fontneau will contact the Town Planner regarding any input he might have for the chapter. The most recent version of the chapter will be sent to the Commissioners.

9. SALEM BUSINESS OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

a. In-Person Outreach

Chairman Shelley reported that he spoke with businesses during the month regarding any possible suggestions they might have regarding the utilization of the town's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds. Based on his conversations, the businesses did not appear very interested in receiving any indirect funds, but were interested in having other like-minded businesses in town and hoped the funds could be utilized to encourage businesses to come to Salem.

Commissioner Fontneau also held the same conversations with businesses. He felt they were receptive to the idea of producing and offering coupons and were also interested in signage. He stated that the coupons would encourage the residents to buy local and provide the Commission with data related to where the public spends their money. While Chairman Shelley was very supportive of the idea of offering coupons, he expressed his concern with the proper verbiage and financial logistics of the coupons and felt that the Board of Selectmen and/or Town Attorney should be consulted for an opinion.

Commissioner Houchin reported that he spoke with Dee Doolittle of Mitchell Farm Equine Retirement, Inc., who provided a few possible ways to expend the ARPA Funds, including placing an advertisement in *The Day* newspaper's seasonal magazines. The advertisement could either highlight its existing businesses and/or the Town of Salem to invite individuals to establish their business in the town. She also suggested the possibility of purchasing and mailing coupons and/or including them in a Welcome Packet for new residents and hosting a Salem Business Fair where local businesses can have a table to promote their business. Chairman Shelley expressed his appreciation to Ms. Doolittle for her ideas.

b. Welcome Packet – none

10. NEW BUSINESS – none

11. OLD BUSINESS

a. Salem Business Survey

Commissioner Houchin reported that the Survey has been reduced to four (4) questions by combining questions 1 and 5. He suggested the possibility of mailing the survey to the local businesses with a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope). Chairman Shelley proposed the possibility of mailing a postcard with a QR Code directly sending them to the survey. They hope to begin distributing and promoting the Survey during the Summer.

The Survey will be moved as Item 8 on future agendas.

b. ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funding / Salem Small Business Assistance

See item 9.

12. ADJOURNMENT

**M/S/C: Houchin/Fontneau, to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 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