

**TOWN OF SALEM  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2022, 7:00 P.M.  
SALEM TOWN HALL, CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

**PRESENT**

Steven Shelley, Chairman  
Melissa Beers  
Carl Fontneau  
John Houchin  
Alexandra Marsh, Alternate (7:05 p.m., seated)

**ABSENT**

Victoria Knopf  
John Gilbert, Alternate

**CALL TO ORDER:**

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

**CALL TO ORDER:**

**1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**2. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES**

**M/S/C: Houchin/Beers, to approve the March 15, 2022 Economic Development Commission Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor.**

**3. CORRESPONDENCE – none**

**4. PUBLIC COMMENTS – none**

**5. 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

In lieu of Senator Formica, Representative Cheeseman, and First Selectman Chmielewski, Chairman Shelley reported that the Legislators are currently in session. Representative Cheeseman expressed her excitement about the recent developments in the State and the State's future. She encourages the town to be fiscally responsible with the town's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act). She wished to thank the Commissioners for their involvement and sent her regrets for not being able to attend this evening's meeting.

*Commissioner Marsh entered the meeting at 7:05 p.m.*

**M/S/C: Houchin/Beers, to seat Commissioner Marsh for Commissioner Knopf.**

**Discussion: None. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor.**

First Selectman Chmielewski, who was also unable to attend this evening's meeting due to a conflicting engagement, sent his appreciation to the Commission for their service and regrets for his absence. The 1 New London Road Plaza has been sold and Chairman Shelley reported that he has sent an e-mail to the new owners congratulating them on their recent purchase. He expressed his hopes that the new owners will be more involved and strive to improve the property, inviting new businesses.

## **6. CT OFFICE OF TOURISM**

### **a. EASTERN REGION TOURISM DISTRICT UPDATE**

The Board continued to discuss the renaming of the districts. Salem is part of District 3, which includes the towns of Colchester, Hebron, East Lyme, New London, Haddam, Waterford, Norwich, Bozrah, Bolton, and Montville. Possible names were briefly discussed and the Commissioners were encouraged to send him any suggestions by their next scheduled meeting on May 5.

## **7. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD)**

Commissioner Fontneau reported that significant progress has been made with the POCD. The following goals were added to the chapter:

Trade Shows – The Commission did engage in trade shows in the past when the town had more staffing, a larger budget, and less difficulties inviting new businesses. The endeavor was unsuccessful at the time and, he believes, would be equally unsuccessful now. Commissioner Beers agreed, adding that they should strive to keep their efforts local.

Encouraging Agricultural Developments – Agriculture would not expand the tax base. Commissioner Fontneau stated that, should the goal be to support agriculturally-related businesses and cottage industries, he would be in agreeance. Commissioner Houchin suggested that, because most, if not all, of the land is spoken for, they should encourage those who own and run farms to continue their practice.

Commissioner Fontneau expressed his hopes that the goals, which he felt are unattainable, would be eliminated in the final version of the chapter. Commissioners Houchin and Shelley felt that neither of the goals have a specific, targeted result. Chairman Shelley voiced his discontent with the revisions and expressed his opposition to including such broad and open-ended goals, which are, in essence, recommendations, rather than goals.

Chairman Shelley recited the chapter's final paragraph and reviewed the goals and action steps. He encouraged the Commissioners to review the chapter and provide any feedback for their discussion with the Planning & Zoning Commission. It was noted that, while the

Commission can recommend, suggest, and provide input, the final document is under the purview of the Planning & Zoning Commission.

The status of the goals included in the 2012 POCD for the Commission is unknown.

## 8. SALEM BUSINESS SURVEY

The following edits were suggested:

Question 1: What type of business do you run? *Are you a home-based business and, if so, do you offer web-based services?* Do you serve local, regional, state, and/or national areas?

Question 4: What can the Economic Development ~~Council~~ *Commission* do to...

Combine Questions 2 and 4

Commissioner Houchin expressed his support for Chairman Shelley's suggestion to mail a postcard with a QR Code to each household. Rather than mailing a postcard to each household, Commissioner Beers recommended initially sending an announcement with the survey link through social media and, possibly, follow-up the announcement with a mailing, depending on the responses. The Commissioners agreed that the survey should be as least invasive and intrusive as possible. Chairman Shelley tasked the Commissioners with devising up to three short sentences to be posted on Facebook with a hyperlink to the survey for their next meeting.

## 9. SALEM BUSINESS OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

### a. In-Person Outreach

Coupons/Vouchers – Chairman Shelley reported on some very positive outreach experiences regarding the offering of a coupon that would be funded by the town's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds. Based on his conversations with the businesses, he suggested changing the verbiage from coupon to voucher. The businesses would be reimbursed for the voucher monthly. The vouchers may be distributed through the Commission's Business & Services Directory. The vouchers will need to state that they are only good in Salem. Discussion ensued regarding the businesses that might not wish to participate in the program. The Town Treasurer will be consulted regarding the reimbursement process.

EDC Facebook Page – Commissioner Beers proposed posting a welcome message along with a mission statement on the Commission's Facebook page. She also recommended the Commission designate a second Administrator. Commissioner Houchin recommended making the page informational and setting it up to not allow the public to post comments.

### b. Welcome Packet – *no discussion*

**2. NEW BUSINESS – *none***

**3. OLD BUSINESS**

- a. ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funding / Salem Small Business Assistance  
*See item 9a above.*

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

**M/S/C: Fontneau/Houchin, to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m. Discussion: None.  
Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

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