

TOWN OF SALEM
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 21, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Salem Town Hall, Conference Room 1

PRESENT

Steven Shelley, Chairman
Melissa Beers
Carl Fontneau
John Houchin

ABSENT

Victoria Knopf
John Gilbert, Alternate
Alexandra Marsh, Alternate

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Shelley called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA – *none*

3. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES: Tuesday April 19, 2022 Regular Meeting
M/S/C: Fontneau/Beers, to approve the April 19, 2022 Economic Development Commission Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 4-0, 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

Chairman Shelley reported that Senator Formica, Representative Cheeseman, and First Selectman Ed Chmielewski expressed their appreciation to the Commission for their volunteerism and continued interest in the community.

The First Selectman informed him of the recent sale of the Salem Town Center (1 New London Road) and the active involvement of the new owners to improve and revitalize the property. Commissioner Beers reported that one of the tenants expressed their excitement with the interior renovations of the units while maintaining the rental rate.

Chairman Shelley stated that he introduced himself to the new owner, who plans to remodel the interior of the vacant units, making them more presentable to prospective tenants. The new owner requested feedback from the Commissioners regarding the type(s) of businesses the residents might like to have in the Town. Suggestions included a dry-cleaning pick-up and drop-off business and a consignment shop for local crafters and small businesses. The limitations the property's well and septic system poses were briefly discussed.

Senator Formica and Representative Cheeseman informed him of recently passed bills, including HB (House Bill) 5122, which studies the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic development, and SB (Senate Bill) 407, an initiative to provide support for woman-owned businesses that were negatively impacted by the pandemic.

7. CT OFFICE OF TOURISM

a. Eastern Region Tourism District Update

Chairman Shelley provided an update regarding the proposed renaming of the districts. The Town of Salem is part of District 2, which includes the towns of Colchester, Hebron, East Lyme, New London, Haddam, Waterford, Norwich, Bozrah, Bolton, and Montville. While the name "Thames River Valley" was submitted and voted upon, the Mohegan Tribal Leader requested that the name not be changed as the Casino's marketing campaigns are based on the "Mystic Country slogan". The Committee tabled the item.

In response to Commissioner Houchin who questioned the original impetus for the renaming of the districts, Chairman Shelley stated that it was felt that "Mystic Country" did not adequately reflect the entire district and resulted in an unequal distribution of funding to the towns located within the district. The amount of funding the Town of Salem is receiving is unknown. Commissioner Fontneau suggested "Shoreline East" or "Mohegan-Pequot Shores" as other possible names.

8. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD)

Commissioner Fontneau updated the Commissioners on some of the revisions that were made to the POCD. One of the items the Commission was tasked with is ensuring that local nurseries are not selling invasive species, which is not under their purview. He plans to discuss the issue with the Planning & Zoning Commission.

He noted that the Town's Open Space has grown by approximately 10% over the last ten years, from 21% to 31%. The increase places pressure on the remaining land available for the establishment of businesses and residences. In addition, many will not establish a business without the existence of an adequate population to serve. The amount of land that is designated as PA-49 (Farm & Forestry) has also grown.

Chairman Shelley proposed making a motion to draft a letter to the Planning & Zoning Commission regarding their concerns of the continual growth of PA-490 and Open Space land and its resulting limitations on the commercial growth of the Town. Discussion ensued regarding the residents' preference for maintaining the rural character of the Town, utilizing the Town's current commercial property, and the possibility of creating a balance between the two. Commissioner Beers proposed the possibility of redistricting certain areas/zones. Commissioner Fontneau suggested the possibility of studying the effects of PA490 and Open Space land and its potential for residential and commercial growth. The discussion was tabled.

9. SALEM BUSINESS SURVEY

Chairman Shelley reported that the EDC Facebook account has been established and discussed the posting of an introduction of the Commission and Commissioners to the community. The initial post would include their mission statement and contact information. He will send a proposed post to the Commissioners for review and discussion during their next meeting.

Commissioner Beers proposed the following tagline to the Commissioners:

Preserving the past, embracing the present, creating the future...Salem EDC

10. SALEM BUSINESS OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

- a. In-Person Outreach
- b. Welcome Packet

Commissioner Fontneau presented a draft of the EDC welcome page for the website for review and discussion during their next meeting. The page includes an introduction letter, framed by hot buttons with links to related Town departments for prospective businesses.

11. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Houchin announced that nominations for the Unsung Heroes Award are being accepted. Past recipients may not be nominated. The deadline for nominations is July 31 and a banquet to honor the recipients is being planned for November. He provided a brief background of the Unsung Heroes, stating that it was created by the Democratic and Republican Town Committees to recognize individuals who have provided exceptional volunteer services to the Town.

12. OLD BUSINESS

- a. ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funding / Salem Small Business Assistance
Chairman Shelley reported that, after speaking with the First Selectman and the Town Attorney, it was determined that the business vouchers would be too

cumbersome for the Town's staff to adequately pursue. Commissioner Houchin felt that, once the Facebook page and the updated webpage has officially launched, they would be able to gain a sense of the public's wishes, providing them with the impetus to pursue their goals.

Commissioner Beers suggested hosting a Meet & Greet event at the Salem Community Park Pavilion in which local businesses set up tables to introduce and/or promote their businesses. Chairman Shelley proposed the possibility of catering a networking event. Another possibility that was raised is to host a *Christmas in July* event for local businesses to promote their businesses and sell their products.

Commissioner Fontneau proposed the possibility of posting an announcement in the *Our Town Salem* newsletter inviting home occupation businesses to submit their business cards for inclusion in an upcoming issue of *Our Town Salem*. The business-sized advertisements would be funded by their ARPA funds. The information received could also be used to group like-businesses into clusters and create synergies and provide additional businesses to the Business Directory. Commissioner Beers suggested promoting a QR Code linking them to the survey, which, if completed and submitted, would reward them with a free business card-size advertisement, increasing their exposure and complementing their Facebook campaign.

13. ADJOURNMENT

**M/S/C: Fontneau/Beers, to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Discussion: None.
Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

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