

**TOWN OF SALEM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2022, 7:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL, CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Steven Shelley, Chairman
Carl Fontneau
John Houchin
Alexandra Marsh, Alternate (*seated*)

ABSENT

Melissa Beers
Victoria Knopf
John Gilbert, Alternate

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Shelley called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

M/S/C: Houchin/Fontneau, to seat Alternate Commissioner Marsh for Full Member Commissioner Beers. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 3-0, all in favor.

2. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA – *none*

3. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES: Tuesday, July 19, 2022 Regular Meeting

M/S/C: Houchin/Fontneau, to approve the July 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

The Commissioners agreed to remove “and COVID-19 Impact” from the item for future agendas.

Chairman Shelley reported that Senator Formica and Representative Cheeseman informed him of an additional Representative that will be serving the Town of Salem due to the re-districting, beginning in November. They are hopeful that the recently passed bills will have a positive impact on the community.

He also reported that First Selectman Chmielewski wished to extend his appreciation to the Commissioners. The owners of Salem Town Center at 1 New London Road continue to improve the plaza and are seeking recommendations for businesses or types of businesses to fill the vacant spaces. They hope to move in new tenants in the next three to six months. Tenants have begun moving into the first 12 units of Green Village II, the new age-restricted development on Route 82. Each unit is comprised of one bedroom, one bathroom, and a one-car garage. The units are being rented at fair market rates. It is unknown if the utilities are included in the rent. Additional State Police patrols, traffic control, and other mitigation features have been deployed to help manage the Route 82 detour.

7. CT OFFICE OF TOURISM

a. Eastern Region Tourism District Update – *no report*

The next meeting will be held this Thursday, August 18. He stated that he has submitted the question regarding the decision to divide the district into two, rather than three, sections.

8. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD)

Commissioner Fontneau reported that, with the exception of three chapters, the document is complete. The Planning & Zoning Commission plans to have the final draft completed in September. He noted that one of the Commission's tasks is to evaluate the zoning of properties and suggested the possibility of, not only considering the rezoning of land, but also adding new zoning. He noted that less than 4% of the town's area is zoned Commercial, whereas approximately 6% of land is protected by the Eightmile River Watershed buffer (protected) zone.

Chairman Shelley proposed adding a new item to the agenda item to discuss the possible modifications that can be made to the Town's Zoning Map. A copy of the Zoning Map will be sent to the Commissioners for review.

9. SALEM BUSINESS SURVEY

The Commission's Facebook page is currently active and has had very little engagement. A link to the page can be included on the Commission's page on the Town website. Other possibilities also include a Town e-blast and Posting a notice in *Our Town Salem*.

10. SALEM BUSINESS OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

a. In-Person Outreach

Chairman Shelley reported that business cards with the Commissioners' names have been ordered. Commissioner Houchin reported that he received positive feedback from a local contractor regarding the town's processes.

b. Welcome Packet

Discussion ensued regarding Commissioner Fontneau's draft for the Commission's welcome page for the website. The page includes "hot buttons" for various related town departments and useful tips. Commissioner Houchin volunteered to work with the town to compile and create links to PDFs of the various departmental brochures.

11. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Fontneau reported that the Arborio Brothers (old Panfili's) have begun working on the property on Route 82. He also provided a summary of the application submitted by 45 Forest Drive, LLC, to the Planning & Zoning Commission to apply the Special Agriculture Overlay Zone to 45 Forest Drive for the purpose of operating a special event facility, with associated overnight lodging.

Chairman Shelley felt that the establishment of such a business could have, at least, some economic impact on the town and felt that a review of the town's zoning map to determine select areas for possible re-zoning could prove beneficial for prospective businesses. Commissioner Houchin added that the Commission could also consider helping those who have purchased a property to develop a business and appear to be at a standstill, i.e., the storage facility on Route 85, in addition to working on bringing in new businesses.

12. OLD BUSINESS

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

Chairman Shelley stated that Commissioner Beers suggested holding their monthly meetings at local businesses as a way to promote them. Commissioner Houchin suggested inviting businesses to create a promotional video that can be streamed to the public. Chairman Shelley added that a business could be invited to create an audio advertisement that would be aired on local radio stations. One business could be selected per month and the airtime would be funded through the Commission's ARPA Funds. Discussion ensued on how the businesses would be selected. Commissioner Fontneau reminded the Commission of their discussion to host an event with the town's home occupation businesses at the Pavilion. It was noted that Commissioner Beers is in the process of drafting a list of such businesses. The possibility of developing a town-owned property where businesses would be encouraged to incubate and grow, eventually filling the vacant spaces was introduced.

13. ADJOURNMENT

**M/S/C: Fontneau/Houchin, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Discussion: None.
Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**