

**TOWN OF SALEM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2023, 7:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL, CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Melissa Beers, Chairperson
John Houchin, Vice Chairperson
Amanda Lawrence
Kathleen Roderick (7:10 p.m.)
Michael Smith

ABSENT

Alexandra Marsh, Alternate

ALSO PRESENT

First Selectman Ed Chmielewski

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Beers called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The following adjustment was made to the Agenda:

Delete the following item:

3(a) Monday, June 26, 2023 Special Meeting

Add the following items:

3(a) Tuesday, July 18, 2023 Regular Meeting

3(b) Friday, July 28, 2023 Economic Development Commission & Recreation
Commission Joint Special Meeting

3. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES:

a. Tuesday, July 18, 2023 Regular Meeting

b. Friday, July 28, 2023 Economic Development Commission and Recreation
Commission Joint Special Meeting

**M/S/C: Houchin/Lawrence, to approve the June 26, 2023 Economic Development
Commission Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0,
all in favor.**

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Beers reported on a meeting with the Indianfield Campground to host a smaller vendor fair at the Campground next summer. They also offered to post the Commission's upcoming events on their Facebook page and website. She also spoke with Burnett's Country Gardens, who is interested in hosting a joint vendor event.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS – *none*

6. SALEM BUSINESS

- a. Update from Senator Paul Formica and Martha Marx – *no report*
- b. Update from State Representatives Holly Cheeseman and Irene Haynes
- c. Update from Salem First Selectman Ed Chmielewski

Chairperson Beers reported that Representative Cheeseman, who attended their first Roundtable event this evening, provided positive feedback regarding their inaugural Christmas in July event. She also spoke concerning the possibility of obtaining a grant to help with the ongoing issues at Gardner Lake State Park.

First Selectman Chmielewski welcomed the new Commissioners. He reported that both Representatives Cheeseman and Haynes relayed their congratulations on hosting an outstanding event, which has received positive feedback from all of the participants. He also congratulated and commended the Commissioners, most notably Chairperson Beers and Commissioner Smith for their hard work and efforts to overcome several obstacles to host a first-ever collaborative event with the Recreation Commission. The event led to a First Selectman and Economic Development Commission Business Owners Roundtable Discussion, which was held just before this evening's meeting. Those in attendance provided several good ideas and expressed their overwhelming support of the Commission's direction. One of the ideas included the possibility of recognizing the town's businesses that have given back to the community. He reiterated his appreciation for and pride in the Commission.

6. SALEM BUSINESS OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

- a. In-Person Outreach

A productive Roundtable Workshop was held this evening. The comments and feedback received from those who were unable to attend the Workshop will be shared with the Commission at a later date. The next Roundtable Workshop will be held on Tuesday, September 19, at 6:00 p.m.

Copies of the *2021/22 Business & Services Directory* were distributed to the Commissioners.

Chairperson Beers requested assistance in gathering e-mail addresses for some of the brick-and-mortar businesses, including *Two Brothers Restaurant* and *Salem Prime Cuts*.

- b. Welcome Packet – *no update*

A link to the draft of the online welcome page will be forwarded to the Commissioners for review and comment.

7. CHRISTMAS IN JULY WRAP-UP

The Commissioners were commended and thanked for their involvement with the event. Chairperson Beers reported that 43 surveys were submitted. The ratings ranged from 7 to 10 and averaged 9.073. Suggestions for in-town businesses included more shopping, rustic bars, grocery stores, flower shops, dispensaries, spas, restaurants, arcades, and coffee/café/breakfast/sandwich shops. Suggestions for future events included a bounce house, more vendors, and more food options. Commissioner Houchin felt that more businesses would express a wish to participate next year, having experienced the inaugural event. Commissioner Smith felt that they may need to expand and search for food vendors outside of Salem. The Commissioners agreed that the Recreation Commission's Passport was very successful and encouraged the guests to visit all of the booths. Commissioner Lawrence suggested hosting additional participatory activities, e.g., holding a Christmas Tree Decorating Contest for the businesses in which the attendees vote on their favorite(s). Commissioner Roderick proposed offering more holiday-focused crafts. Commissioner Smith proposed having activities for adults sponsored by the businesses, such as a cornhole tournament. Commissioner Houchin reported that several attendees complained about the loudness of the sound of the band under the Pavilion. Commissioner Smith stated that they might consider having an Emcee or DJ rather than a live band at their future events. He also proposed holding the event the weekend after the Fourth of July, with a rain date, when the weather might be cooler. Commissioner Roderick also proposed shortening the event by one hour. In contrast, Commissioner Smith reported that, according to the survey, several people suggested making the event longer. Commissioner Houchin suggested the possibility of splitting the event, noting that there was a lull between 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. and extending the time. Commissioner Smith requested volunteers to post and pick up signage for future events and noted the need for a storage area to store the signs for future use.

Commissioner Roderick proposed hosting a Small Business Saturday, which is held the Saturday after the Thanksgiving holiday, at Burnett's Country Gardens. Chairperson Beers will speak with Burnett's regarding the possibility of hosting the event at their venue.

8. BUDGET UPDATE

The following expenses were reported for the recent Christmas in July event:

	Budgeted	Expended
Advertising:	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 1,919.58
Food:	\$ 300.00	\$ 273.49
Incidentals	\$ 300.00	\$ 241.04
Band	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00
Porta-Potty Rental	\$ 500.00	\$ 350.00

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of purchasing a full-page ad in the next four (4) issues of *Our Town Salem*. The cost for a one-time full-page ad is \$725.00 and \$625.00 each or \$2,500.00 for a full-page ad in four (4) issues. The first full-page ad would include photographs of the Christmas in July event and be used to thank the vendors and public for participating in the event. The remaining ads could feature/recognize a new or existing business or promote an upcoming event. Commissioner Houchin also proposed the possibility of honoring those businesses that have given back to the town in a significant way with a plaque and a dinner, similar to the Unsung Heroes Awards. The businesses would be nominated by the community and the final selections would be determined by the Commission. Commissioner Lawrence proposed having the four (4) businesses that are highlighted throughout the year be the businesses that qualify to be recognized for the award. Each quarter may have a new criterion. Chairperson Beers requested that Commissioner Houchin develop four (4) different sets of criteria for further discussion. Commissioner Lawrence suggested rolling out the nomination forms on Small Business Saturday.

M/S/C: Lawrence/Roderick, to allocate an amount not to exceed \$2,500.00 for four (4) full page ads in the next four (4) issues of *Our Town Salem*. Discussion: The first full-page advertisement will be used to thank the vendors and public and include photographs of the Christmas in July event. The following issues could include soliciting nominations and highlighting select businesses. Voice vote, 5-0, all in favor.

9. NEW BUSINESS – none

10. OLD BUSINESS – none

Commissioner Lawrence, who was disappointed that the Lions Club no longer distributes the yearly calendar to the residents, suggested the Commission pick up the project. Commissioner Houchin stated that the calendar costed approximately \$5,800.00 to produce and was ceased due to issues related to its delivery and the growing lack of volunteers to deliver the calendars.

11. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Houchin/Lawrence, to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 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