

**TOWN OF SALEM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021 – 8:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Edward Chmielewski, Jr., Chairman
Carl Fontneau
Steven Shelley

ABSENT

none

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Chmielewski called the meeting to order at 8:02 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. ADDITIONS/MODIFICATIONS TO AGENDA – *none*

3. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES

M/S/C: Fontneau/Shelley, to approve the January 20, 2021 Regular 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

Chairman Chmielewski reported that the COVID-19 positive cases are now at approximately 2% and the situation appears to be improving.

a. Update from Senator Paul Formica

b. Update from State Representative Holly Cheeseman

Senator Formica and Representative Cheeseman continue to work behind the scenes for businesses. Information regarding additional available grants for small businesses may be found on the State website at [ct.gov](https://www.ct.gov).

c. Update from Salem First Selectman Kevin Lyden

First Selectman Lyden continues to reach out to the town's businesses as they do their best to work hard and stay open during these difficult times.

During a recent canvassing of local businesses, Commissioner Shelley reported that approximately eight local businesses located at the town's round-a-bout expressed their growing concerns and questioned the State's plan to increase their capacities, providing a sense of hope and return to normalcy. In response, Chairman Chmielewski agreed that the situation is frustrating for all involved and encouraged everyone to continue to lobby and reach out to their

Legislators for updates. Based on the decreasing numbers and distribution of vaccinations, it is hoped that the situation will further improve and they will be able to return to some sense of normalcy. The town continues to advocate for the safe opening of businesses and encourage individuals to patronize the local businesses.

7. PUBLIC BLIGHT COMPLAINTS UPDATE

a. 1 NEW LONDON ROAD, SALEM PLAZA

Thanks to the efforts of the First Selectman, the owners continue to maintain the property. Commissioner Shelley added that many of the businesses are experiencing difficulties communicating with the owner(s), including renegotiating their leases due to the current economic conditions as the result of the pandemic.

M/S/C: Shelley/Fontneau, to delete Item 7, Public Blight Complaints Update, from future agendas. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 3-0, all in favor.

8. CT OFFICE OF TOURISM

a. EASTERN REGION TOURISM DISTRICT UPDATE

Chairman Chmielewski reported that the Board of Directors continues to work behind the scenes to help bring back tourism to Eastern Connecticut.

9. EDC BUSINESS & SERVICE DIRECTORY 2021

Commissioner Shelley reported that he spoke with the printer regarding the receipt of an updated estimate with alternative paper stock options to reduce the total cost. Currently, the cost estimate is \$8,000.00 or \$200.00/page. He stated that the businesses he spoke with felt that a 30% reduction in cost for the ads would be affordable. As such, his goal is to reduce the production cost by 30% to 40%. Chairman Chmielewski expressed his wish to aim for a 50% reduction to offer the businesses more reprieve. Commissioner Shelley proposed the possibility of extending the timeframe while Chairman Chmielewski wished to maintain their original goal of having the Directory completed by August/September to provide the local businesses with a jump start as the pandemic subsides.

10. SENIOR-FRIENDLY / AGE-RESTRICTED HOUSING DISCUSSION

Commissioner Fontneau reported that the site has been cleared and progress is being made in the construction of the base of the road for the development. The Planning & Zoning Commission has been discussing the town's Affordable Housing Plan, which must be completed by 2022. Currently, approximately 2% of the town's housing is considered affordable; the State requires that all municipalities have a minimum of 10% affordable housing. While much of the town's housing units may be considered affordable, they do not meet the State's requirements to be considered as such. He suggested the possibility of reaching out to the Legislators to decrease the 10% goal for towns such as Salem, which reaches other State goals, including open space and providing water to other towns, but lacks public sewer and water, making it less attractive to developers. He also proposed that the Board of Selectmen apply for a grant to renovate properties that would qualify them to meet the affordable housing guidelines.

11. PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD)

Commissioner Fontneau plans to distribute copies of the zoning map for their next meeting so they can begin discussing the use of industrial land to highway commercial property and hopes to meet with the Zoning Officer and Town Planner in the future regarding the zoning of property for businesses. He is also hoping to conduct a cottage industry cluster analysis of home occupation businesses. Both of these items can be proposed to the Planning & Zoning Commission for inclusion in the town's POCD as ways to encourage development. Other ideas include encouraging business development by utilizing the land use documents. The Planning & Zoning Commission is in the process of seeking the input of other boards, commissions, and organizations.

12. SALEM BUSINESS OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

a. Electronic Survey (Commissioner Shelley)

Commissioner Shelley reported that approximately half of the local businesses he spoke with during his recent canvassing felt that they would participate in the survey. He hopes to have the final survey ready for review at their next regular meeting and suggested the survey be sent to approximately 100 of the town's businesses by April.

b. In-Person Outreach (Commissioner Shelley)

Commissioner Shelley reported that his goal is to visit three to four businesses weekly. Those he has visited have felt supported by the town and continue to seek the town's support with the State Legislators. Chairman Chmielewski added that both the First Selectman and himself continue to visit the town's local businesses and express their support. He also encouraged the Commissioners to document their efforts as they work to enhance communications with the State Legislators.

c. Welcome Packet (Commissioner Fontneau) – no update

13. NEW BUSINESS

14. OLD BUSINESS – none

15. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C: Shelley/Fontneau, to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 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