

TOWN OF MONTVILLE
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes – March 18, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.
Montville Town Hall – Room 203

1. **Call to Order**

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

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

All stood and pledged the flag.

3. **Roll Call**

Commissioners present were Sheelagh Lapinski, Christopher Napierski, Jim Toner, and Chairman Walter Hewitt. Also present was Town Councilor Rogers. Commissioner Mickey Gillette was absent due to illness. A quorum was present.

4. **Alterations to the Agenda**

Motion by Commissioner Toner; seconded by commissioner Napierski to add the following items to New Business: a) Presentation by Michael Whitehouse of the Groton RTM; b) Discussion by Commissioner Lapinski regarding a consultant for EDC; 3) Discussion by Chairman Hewitt regarding seCTer emails. Discussion: none. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

5. **Remarks from the Public regarding items on the Agenda (3-minute limit)**

Chairman Hewitt asked three (3) times for remarks. Resident Heather Harris introduced herself to the Commission and spoke about her return to Montville after having moved away 15 years ago. She said she is employed by Hyatt Place and attended the meeting toward possible interest as a commission member.

6. **To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve:**

a. The Minutes of Regular Meeting of January 22, 2019.

Motion by Commissioner Toner; seconded by Commissioner Napierski to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2019, as written. Discussion: Town Councilor Rogers asked for an addition to Paragraph b on P. 2 that *the Mohegan Tribe is unwilling to assist* with Town growth and development as originally reported by Mayor McDaniel. Town Councilor Rogers said the Tribe wants to keep things inside the casino but said he is looking to work harder to try to get it to support the Town of Montville. Motion by Commissioner Toner, seconded by Commissioner Napierski to amend the original motion to approve the January 22, 2019 minutes, as amended. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor. Motion carried.

7. **Unfinished Business**

a. EDC Website

i. Town of Montville

Commissioner Napierski reported that no changes were made to the EDC website but if any items come up he can revise it.

ii. Facebook – *No report*

iii. seCTer

This item to be discussed under Item 8.c.

iv. Blog for EDC (Currently at <http://whewitt.com>)

Chairman Hewitt reported the blog had not been updated but he will include on it the seCTer information.

b. New Business Report.

Commissioner Toner reported there were no new businesses in February but said two (2) new ones will be coming to the Montville Commons, good news for the Town and the mall.

c. Potential formation of a Montville Community Development Corporation – 501(c)(3)
Chairman Hewitt stated he had nothing new to report and said Mayor McDaniel's comments at the last meeting, he felt, were not favorable to formation of a 501(c)(3). He questioned whether the Commission should pursue the idea or make a presentation to the Town Council about it. Town Councilor Rogers said support was needed on both sides and that the proposal was a good idea to pursue internally commenting further that change may come in November.

d. Businesses leaving Mohegan Sun – Opportunity to them to Rte. 32?

Commissioner Toner stated the Commission needed to consider "what" and "who" for business resource planning for the forum. He reported on invitees from state and federal agencies to the forum over the past two (2) years who spoke for 10 minutes and thereafter had one-on-one time with attendees on topics ranging from banking, seCTer, and state contracts. Commissioner Toner then spoke about marketing which he said businesses have lost the ability to do and was not a topic at the last forum according to Commissioner Napierski. He emphasized target market and age group as criteria for marketing via social media venues. A marketing group, Miranda Creative, will be invited to this year's forum and a local realtor, Londregan's that lists most of the Town's properties, as suggested by Town Councilor Rogers.

The Commission continued discussion about a date and place for the forum. Commissioner Toner said the fire hall was no longer available and the plan is to move the event to mid or late September during the evening from 6-9 p.m., instead of the morning as done in the past. The high school cafeteria was proposed for space purposes with the proposed date of September 24, 2019, that Town Councilor Rogers will request with Superintendent of Schools Laurie Palin. Commissioner Toner spoke of a round robin with his Score colleagues but said he was not sure what was best. He agreed to contact Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce president, Tony Sheridan. Resident H. Harris welcomed the Commission to take a tour of Hyatt Place. Michael Whitehouse from the Groton RTM agreed to advertise the event on its network email. Commissioner Toner said on the night of the event, Commissioners should arrive at 5:15 p.m. for setup and he suggested to

Chairman Hewitt to increase the budget for refreshments. Speakers for the forum will include Chairman Hewitt and Mayor McDaniel. Town Councilor Rogers will contact Town Council Chairman McNally about speaking at the event.

e. Businesses leaving Mohegan Sun – Opportunity to them to Rte. 32?

Commissioner Toner asked if anyone had a contact person at Mohegan Sun with knowledge about upcoming businesses and those businesses leaving the casino or anyone networked there. Marketing approaches to traffic businesses or market existing casino businesses to the Town was proposed by Chairman Hewitt and discussed by the Commission. M. Whitehouse said it was easy to contact local businesses for potential expansion such as The Shack that currently has three (3) locations. Town Councilor Rogers proposed creating a list of businesses that the Town does not have as a starting point. Commissioner Toner read from a potential business list previously discussed by the Commission that included a dry cleaner, car wash, auto parts, and steam cheeseburgers. Chairman Hewitt proposed that the Commission prioritize the list for “potential and synergy for what the Town does have or need.”

8. New Business

a. Presentation by Michael Whitehouse of the Groton RTM.

Michael Whitehouse, a liaison to the Town of Groton RTM, spoke about the RTM and the actions and goals of the Groton EDC that he said is supported by interaction of the Town with the EDC. He said the goals of the Groton EDC is contact with businesses that is fun once started, and feedback that businesses are usually interested in giving. Responding to a question by Town Councilor Rogers about the anticipated influx of EB employees, M. Whitehouse said a group of EDC members are working with Electric Boat on the same. He also stated the EDC has two (2) Town paid staff who go to conferences out of town to market Groton and are making progress on a lot of properties. Mr. Whitehouse also spoke of a publishing business he owns, a book he wrote, marketing resources, networking potential, and the lack of communication between towns adding that he recently rejoined the Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce. Town Councilor Rogers suggested that the Commission explore the Groton website and also commented on the Town’s own archaic website. He suggested that the Commission send flyers to other town EDCs while Commissioner Toner suggested contact with area chambers of commerce.

b. Discussion by Commissioner Lapinski regarding a consultant for EDC.

Commissioner Lapinski spoke of an email from consultant Michelle Hartmann who does consulting, reviews proposals, and tracks and provide consultation for social media marketing. Chairman Hewitt reported that he wrote Ms. Hartmann back and told her of the limited EDC budget and said the consultant’s services could benefit Montville with a definitive plan. Commissioner Toner suggested follow-up with the consultant with a defined plan and an inquiry to her about what she can deliver and her consulting fee.

c. Discussion by Chairman Hewitt regarding seCTer emails.

Chairman Hewitt stated he would forward an email from seCTer to the Commission

concerning eastern Connecticut manufacturing versus a pipeline, the Southeastern Council of Governments regional housing projects, and other businesses Electric Boat needs to meet its timelines all of which offers opportunities for synergy. Resident H. Harris commented on the saturation of hotels in the area. Chairman Hewitt commented on an option for conference space that he said would be hard to compete with the Mohegan Sun then said car services or limos would be needed. Town Councilor Rogers spoke about the businesses absorbed by the Mohegan Tribe which does not benefit the Town as well as its business acquisitions outside of Montville. He again mentioned a bike trail from New London to Norwich as an opportunity for the Town.

9. Townspeople and Business Feedback

a. Proposed Recipients for Business Recognition Award

Chairman Hewitt mentioned that honorees have been chosen until the end of the fiscal year in June. Town Councilor Rogers suggested the Commission consider recipients from July to year's end.

10. Report from Town Council Liaison

Town Councilor Rogers thanked the commissioners for attending a Rotary Club function.

11. Remarks from the Public (3-minute limit)

Chairman Hewitt asked three (3) times for remarks. Resident H. Harris asked about the communication between the current Town Council and the EDC and about any feedback from it. Town Councilor Rogers stated that he and the commissioners are volunteers. He also commented that the Town Planner's office waits for people to reach out to their department and also said all the towns' staff were now unionized which breeds complacency. Commissioner Toner spoke about his direct contact with new businesses in the past who had questions or were tax delinquent. Chairman Hewitt commented on the EDC Business Award feedback from reposting on social media while Town Councilor Rogers commented on the general Town info shared on the Montville Community Forum. Resident H. Harris said her "niche" was the Mohegan Sun and by expanding from it, using the sales perspective of listening, and having advocates who are imbedded to open those channels. Commissioner Napierski suggested outreach by making contacts or creating an email list that can be managed as proposed by Chairman Hewitt. Commissioner Toner he valued the "voice of the customer." M. Whitehouse said that Groton to use that method stating its EDC invited its residents to engage dialogue. Resident H. Harris said she would be willing to take on this endeavor to "get businesses excited about the EDC wanting to listen." Chairman Hewitt asked that "Outreach Program" be added to the next meeting agenda.

12. Remarks from the Commissioners and Town Council Liaison -- None

13. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Toner; seconded by Commissioner Napierski to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m. Discussion: none. Voice vote, 4-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

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Respectfully submitted by,

Gloria J. Gathers
Recording Secretary, Town of Montville