

Town of Montville
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Agenda for Monday, December 21, 2015
7:00 p.m. – Montville Town Hall - Room 102

1. Call to Order
Vice-Chairman Protz called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. after establishing a quorum.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
Present were Commissioners Marge Gatheral, Walter Hewitt, Christopher Napierski, John Protz, Jim Toner, and Dianne Williams. Absent was Commissioner Karl Butzky. Also present was Town Council Liaison Joe Rogulski.
4. Remarks from the Public regarding items on the Agenda (3 Minute limit) – *none*
5. Alterations to the Agenda – *none*
6. To Consider and Act on a Motion to approve:
 - a. The Regular Meeting Minutes of Monday, November 16, 2015
Motion made by Commissioner Toner, seconded by Commissioner Williams.
Discussion: None. Voice vote, 5-0-1. Voting in Favor: Commissioner Gatheral, Hewitt, Napierski, Toner, and Williams. Voting in Opposition: None. Voting in Abstention: Commissioner Protz. Motion carried.
7. Unfinished Business
 - a. EDC Website Design (Commissioner Protz)
Commissioner Protz reported that he is in the process of scheduling a meeting with Town Planner Marcia Vlaun in preparation to work with Commissioner Gatheral in gathering and posting the available real estate listings on the website.
 - b. Tax Abatement for Commercial Solar Improvements (Commissioner Hewitt)
The Commission was informed that the Tax Abatement for Commercial Solar Improvements is currently being offered by the State of CT. The item will be removed from future agendas.
 - c. Blight Ordinance
The Commissioners reviewed and discussed the Town's ability to enforce the existing Blight Ordinance. Though it does not include any specific definitions of what would be considered blight, it was agreed that the existing Ordinance is acceptable. While a number of blighted properties have been rehabilitated or demolished, such properties

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continue to remain. The ability for a business owner to financially afford the rehabilitation of the property and if and how the Commission might be able to aid them was discussed. In light of the Ordinance's reference to the certification of a list of blighted premises (§195-4), the **Commissioners were tasked with helping facilitate the process by taking note of the blighted properties along Routes 32 and 163 twice a year, in January and July, and compiling a list for Councilor Rogulski, who will, then, submit the list to the Mayor for further action.**

8. New Business

a. Tax Incentive Plan

Commissioner Toner spoke with Zoning Enforcement Officer/Assistant Planning Director Randy Benson, own of Colchester regarding their Tax Incentive Plan. Since its inception less than one year ago, one (1) business has received the incentive, but, in the end, the individual(s) did not open the business. The residents did not have any positive expectations from the Plan, which, Mr. Benson felt, would have a similar outcome in Montville. After re-reviewing the Plan, Commissioner Toner met with Town Planner Marcia Vlaun, who felt that, while it may be a useful tool, the probability of such a Plan helping a large businees would not be very big. He recommended the Commission review, discuss, and modify the Plan and refer it to Councilor Rogulski who can send it the Town Council for review and adoption. Once adopted, the Plan can be posted on the website and offered to businesses and a sub-committee, comprised of either three (3) or five (5) Commissioners, can be formed to review and generate a recommendation regarding the incentives the business(es) should receive. The recommendation would be referred to the Town Council who can approve and schedule a date for a Town Meeting, where the final decision would be made. He also recommended the EDC schedule a Special Meeting(s) to help expedite the process. Councilor Rogulski recommended adding a retroactive provision to the Plan. Above all, the Plan, which would also be offered to existing businesses, would help the EDC continue the dialogue of encouraging businesses to establish/maintain their business in Montville. Commmissioner Hewitt was commended for locating and introducing the Plan to the Commission. **The Tax Incentive Plan will be sent to the Commissioners for review and modification.**

Commissioner Gatheral, who will not return until April 2016, departed from the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

b. Review of current How to Start a Business form

It was agreed that the actual form should be titled "How to Start a Business *in Montville*". There were no recommended revisions to the form.

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9. Status of Businesses

a. Existing Properties/Businesses

1) Drive-in Property – *no update*

b. Report on New Businesses (Commissioner Toner)

Though there were no brick and mortar businesses that opened last month, Commissioner Toner received a list of home businesses that were started in the Town during 2015. He felt that home businesses would be most likely to require the help of the EDC as they would have a limited budget, no formal funding, and/or, most likely, no business plan. He will continue to provide a monthly list of home-based businesses to the Commissioners. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of the Commission to contact and meet with each of these home businesses, possibly together for a breakfast/lunch meeting, to introduce themselves, inform them of their offerings, and begin to create a possible synergy between these and other businesses. **The list will be distributed to the Commissioners and Vice-Chairman Protz will draft a letter to be sent to the home-based businesses for review.** Commissioner Toner was thanked for obtaining the list.

c. Lost Businesses

1) Targeted Mailings

It was confirmed that *Cakes and Cones* will be closing. In addition, it was noted that *Longshots Sports Café* was recently served with an eviction notice, per the judicial website. **Commissioner Toner will speak with the Mayor with the goal of contacting the owners of the business and discussing their available options.**

With respect to creating targeted mailings aimed at those businesses who may be in danger of closing, **Creation of Communications Plan will be added to the next agenda, under New Business, for discussion.**

d. Prospective Businesses

1) Water Park Rumors – *none*

10. Feedback from the Townspeople and Businesses – *none*

11. Proposed Recipients for Business Recognition Award – *none*

12. Report from Town Council Liaison Joe Rogulski – *none*

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13. Communications

- a. 1996 brochure of an EDC breakfast with business owners, similar to the Business Expo Forum they hosted in 2014.

14. Remarks from the Public (3 Minute limit)

Donna Geary recommended the Commission review their charge, determine their task(s), and define their objectives so as to allow them to accomplish their goals. She suggested implementing a campaign to fight blight that can take many forms and involve other businesses, organizations, and the community as well as social media and to, possibly, invite and discuss the issue with Building Inspector Vern Vesey, and determine whether and what kind of help the EDC might be able to offer these businesses. She also suggested posting information targeted to home businesses on the internet.

15. Remarks from the Commissioners

Commissioner Williams proposed including local community colleges under the Labor & Business page of the EDC in addition to the colleges/universities presently listed and to add the Workforce Investment Board under the Link to Resources page of the website.

Commissioner Toner spoke of the tragicness of those who seek to start a business, but lack any awareness of the process, careful planning and/or willingness to seek help.

16. Adjournment

Motion made by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner Toner to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Montville