

Wilton Economic Development Committee – Meeting Minutes July 14, 2015

Attendees: Chris Fuentes, Lee Wilson, Peter Gaboriault, Dave Clune, Keith Rodgerson. Guest - Selectwoman Deborah McFadden

The meeting was called to order at 7:20

Chris did an update on the WEDC website. The website is up and not password protected. Members were instructed to hit the site to improve its appearance in Google search.

The EDC reviewed a draft press release drafted by Chris Fuentes. It will be widely distributed to media outlets such as the Fairfield County Business Journal, Norwalk Hour, Good Morning Wilton, Stamford Advocate, Acorn News papers. The press release was edited and will be sent to the First Selectmen for final review.

Lisa Bogan will be the website administrator. Until she comes up to speed, send content and content suggestions to Chris Fuentes. We need to publicize news and events.

Budget Discussion:

We are starting to get invoices and charges against the budget. Dave Clune will review and process invoices coming to the Commission. Invoices so far are press series, web development services. Dave will set up a spreadsheet to track expenses against categories. Both Mac and Lisa have access to the credit card but need two approvals for processing expenditures. Dave will provide a budget report at the September meeting.

Future business events:

The EDC discussed having one or more events to communicate with the business community. Also discussed was a program to solicit ideas from the community. Good Morning Wilton was suggested as a medium to funnel input. We could publish that list through them and possibly fund the best idea(s).

Other Items:

Peter discussed the property across from Town hall about a potential purchaser. Chris discussed implementing a fast track program with Wilton Planning. The purpose would be to expedite the review and preliminary input of potential projects that would be beneficial to the community. The EDC intends to meet with Bob Niery and First Selectman Brennan and possibly other participants to explore its feasibility. Peter and Keith will set up the initial meeting.

The Commission discussed supporting business that have a reasonable request for land use changes such as site coverage. There was also general discussion about vacancies and retail vacancies.

The EDC will have a guest at the September meeting who will discuss retail vacancies and strategies where the EDC can act.

Discussion ensued about the viability of the retail business model in Wilton. It is not a destination for National chains and has trouble keeping smaller franchise and independent stores. For example, rental rates per square foot have fallen from 2006 according to Lee Wilson. One question is how to make Wilton work for independent businesses. Selectwoman McFadden suggested that the \$450k grant to improve Wilton Center could help link it together for pedestrians. She mentioned other areas that focus on what is unique about their areas. Some focus on arts or something else unique we can build on.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25