

OFFICE OF THE  
FIRST SELECTMAN

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TOWN HALL  
238 Danbury Road  
Wilton, CT 06897

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
SPECIAL MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2011  
MEETING ROOM B, WILTON TOWN HALL**

**PRESENT:** First Selectman Bill Brennan, Selectman Susan Bruschi, Selectman Richard Creeth, Selectman Hal Clark, Selectman Ted Hoffstatter

**WORK SESSION TO DISCUSS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Chairman Bill Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**Background and Goals – First Selectman Brennan**

Earlier this year, the BOS agreed that it was timely to start the necessary planning to form an Economic Development Commission. While Wilton has been successful in increasing its commercial component of the Grand List by approximately +2% over the last 6 years, it is highly desirable to continue activity to grow the commercial segment of our tax base to generate revenues, as commercial development requires fewer Town services than residential development.

In 2010, Wilton's Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) was prepared. This document is the basic directional plan for development in Wilton. It is an advisory plan from the P&Z Commission and for Wilton's government and citizens.

The challenge for a Wilton Economic Development Commission is not an easy one. Wilton is already quite developed and there is limited open space for residential development. 95% of Wilton's space is zoned residential so new commercial development and redevelopment must be an orderly and well planned process that is consistent with the Town's POCD and is site specific.

As we look at the Route 7 corridor, there are many planning considerations:

- Transportation – Ideally new development/redevelopment should be mass transportation centric. The Norwalk/Danbury line is being improved and could be an asset to reduce auto commuting and traffic.

- **Environmental Concerns** – The Town is dedicated to reducing energy consumption. Therefore, future development needs to be energy efficient.
- **Utility Consideration** – Water/Sewer/Natural Gas, etc., are key planning considerations.

In summary, an economic development plan must be custom designed for Wilton. Each Town's needs are different. Therefore, the BOS's role will be to develop specific goals. An Economic Development Commission, when formed, will have the challenge to determine the best way to meet these goals within an Economic Development Plan, which would eventually come to the BOS for approval.

Each of the Selectmen was asked to communicate with other communities regarding their economic development or tax abatement initiatives that have been introduced to stimulate economic activity and expansion (copies of reports attached):

**Ms. Bruschi – Trumbull (population 36,000)** - In Trumbull, the Charter was changed to provide for a 9 member Economic Development Commission. This seems like a large number, but they believe that members of boards such as P&Z and Inland Wetlands should be included as well as some staff members. The EDC is appointed by the Board of Selectmen. In 2004, a part-time Economic Development Director position was created, which is now a full-time position. They have found it is easier to keep a qualified individual as a full-time employee. The annual salary is \$80,000.

The basic objective in Trumbull is "to maximize the areas of town already zoned for industrial and/or commercial purposes that were not being utilized to their fullest potential while at the same time protecting the residential areas". Trumbull is 98% developed with much of the commercial development on the outer periphery of the town. Their basic objectives were to make revisions to the Town POCD that were consistent with economic development strategy. They also found they had to revise the P&Z regulations to be consistent. They then developed a business retention model to maintain the businesses they already have, which is also very important.

**Mr. Clark – Rocky Hill (population 19,000 )** - Rocky Hill is close to Hartford. Commercial properties make up 38% of their grand list. They have had an EDC since the 1970's, starting off with 6 members. They have learned that to be successful, time is of the essence. When you are trying to attract a business, they want decisions made asap. The EDC has a 3 person subcommittee that has the authority to make decisions quickly, as opposed to trying to find a date when six people are available for a meeting. They also go to their existing businesses to find out their plans for expansion; what they like or and do not like about the town; and what they consider important. It is important for your businesspeople to feel you are on their side and want to help them.

Rocky Hill offers tax abatement incentives for business development with the following criteria:

1. Business has a long term commitment to jobs
2. Site development that helps to protect the environment
3. Revitalization of under used properties
4. Expansion of existing businesses.

A section of the Rocky Hill website lists all properties available. The key to this is getting people that have a vested interest in keeping this site updated, i.e. real estate brokers, commercial property owners, etc. A website should also include all standard data about the town that a prospective buyer might be interested in, such as mill rates, utility rates, sewer, water, transportation, etc.

**Mr. Creeth – Windsor (population 29,000)** - Windsor's grand list is 38% commercial. They have a 9 member EDC, an Economic Development Director and a Town Manager, who takes an active interest in this area. Members of the EDC appear to be local citizens who have relevant expertise. No members of the commission are town employees, but the Town Manager and ED Director sit in on most of the meetings.

Windsor has a Community Development position that overlaps the Economic Development position. One lesson they learned is not to oversell incentives. Windsor has four incentive plans in place:

1. Tax abatement policy
2. Building permit fee reduction policy
3. Economic development incentive program
4. Various financing policies

Windsor stated that investment is required and has to be funded. An EDC needs some kind of paid help. They could not operate entirely on their own!

**Mr. Hoffstatter - Berlin (population 21,000).** Report attached - Berlin feels that it is important to have very clear regulations to attract businesses by enabling them to quickly determine if a project will work. Mr. Brennan pointed out that in Wilton, we refer new business prospects to Bob Nerney who goes over everything in detail with potential investor/developers. He lays out a plan of what has to be done. Marcus Partners, a large developer of corporate offices, was very complimentary on how Mr. Nerney and our land use departments worked with them.

**Mr. Brennan – Ridgefield (population 26,000)** - An Economic Development Commission was set up in 2008 with 5 members, which then grew to 7, and does not include any town staff. The commission is made up of a mixture of attorneys, real estate professionals, banking professionals, etc. There was no need for a Charter change as the Board of Selectmen is empowered to appoint commissions and committees. Members of the EDC are appointed as liaisons to other commissions, such as P&Z, Inland Wetlands.

The commission is strong on having a good mix of individuals and not employees on the EDC, particularly people who have pertinent experience. The BOS outlines the objectives, goals and expectations. Bob Knight is EDC Chairman. The Commission provides periodic reports to the BOS. Members are tasked with keeping in touch with a specific boards/commissions and establishing working relationships with boards, such as Conservation and Energy. Commission members seek input and suggestions from these boards.

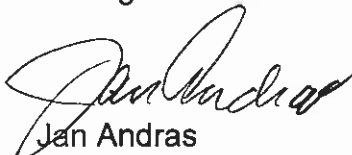
To develop the first EDC plan, the BOS approved a consultant agreement for \$25,000. Ridgefield's EDC Operating budget was \$15,000/year. Bob Knight offered the following: "Several of us on EDC have earned national reputations in Economic Development, land use, planning, and related processes in the private sector. We'd be happy to appear before your board to take you through the process of developing and implementing an economic development plan and to provide an example of an initiative we have been developing in northern Wilton" (Branchville). Mr. Brennan has accepted this offer and will schedule a meeting with Mr. Knight and his colleagues. (November 2, 2011.)

Mr. Brennan stated that the real dilemma for the Board of Selectmen, which is faced with keeping expenses at present levels, (as requested by the Board of Finance), will be to make choices. Even without thinking about an EDC, he is concerned about possible layoffs. As we have reduced 2.5 employees over the past few years, we would have a very difficult time adding any new positions. Mr. Creeth feels that if we really believe an investment is required that will produce a return for the Town, then it is our duty to sell it to the community. We need to think long-term.

Mr. Clark pointed out that an Economic Development Commission could begin by building an inventory of available properties. Mr. Creeth pointed out that a committee will still need help in doing research.

Before the next meeting on this subject, the Selectmen will re-familiarize themselves with Wilton's Plan of Conservation and Development, as any economic development must be consistent with this directional planning document.

Having no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

  
Jan Andras  
Recording Secretary

attachments: T. Hoffstatter information from Berlin CT

## BERLIN, CT

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The role of the Economic Development Department is to attract and retain businesses. In addition to working with businesses and developers on development projects and issues, the Economic Development Department obtains and administers grants for activities that further the cause of economic development in the community. The Economic Development Director works part time. In addition to his Economic Development responsibilities he also assists in coordinating Town real estate acquisition due diligence and obtaining grants to support real estate acquisition.

Services offered to businesses and developers include help in identifying suitable land or buildings for proposed developments, coordinating and facilitating contacts with Town departments involved in regulation and permitting of development projects, and assistance in other aspects of development projects such as financing, finding employees, and obtaining State permits. The Economic Development Department administers two programs to provide direct assistance to business--the Tax Partnership program and the Infrastructure Loan program. The Tax Partnership program offers a phase in of the increase in real property taxes that result from selected types of economic development projects including new or expanded offices, manufacturing buildings and warehouses. Over 60 projects have benefited from the Tax Partnership program since 1999. The Infrastructure Loan program provides grants to businesses to assist in the completion of economic development projects that require infrastructure investments. The grant conditions require that additional real property taxes from the project must exceed the amount of the grant in the first three tax years. Twenty (20) Infrastructures Loans have been approved since 1998. We estimate that the increase in tax revenues to the Town from projects that received tax partnership assistance or and infrastructure loan exceeds \$800,000 per year.

The Economic Development Department also plays a role when local businesses close or relocate. The Department has collaborated on a number of occasions with the Rapid Response Unit of the Connecticut Department of Labor's Rapid Response Unit and Capital Workforce Partners to provide seminars and information for employees that lose their jobs and to help to secure funding for retraining from programs such as the Federal Trade Adjustment Assistance Act.

Since 2000, the Economic Development Department has been awarded over \$5,000,000 in grants for local projects. These include funds for remediation of the Stop and Shop property and the Town property next to Stop and Shop, funds for renovation of the train station (this project is currently moving to the final design phase), for the streetscape improvements now under construction in the Farmington Avenue/New Britain Road area, for the Berlin Veterans Memorial park project also under construction and for the acquisition of the Scheer and Sierra Ranch and Girl Scout Property Open Space sites in South Kensington. The Department also submits proposals and receives and administers funds for projects under the Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) including an effort to design and install new signage at major gateways entering the Town.

The Economic Development Commission prepared the redevelopment plan and coordinates Town brownfields funding assistance to the Lofts at Sherwood Falls project. The first phase of the Sherwood project was completed in September 2010.

The Economic Development Commission has also taken an active role in working with the Planning and Zoning Commission including recently approved zoning amendments for the Berlin Turnpike area and design guidelines for commercial areas to help upgrade the aesthetic appearance of our commercial corridors.

Economic Development marketing activities include the printing of a Town brochure and the maintenance of a Town economic development web site ([www.berlin-ct.com](http://www.berlin-ct.com)), staging of an annual commercial real estate brokers breakfast and participation in marketing events of the International Council of Shopping Centers, the Commercial Division of the Greater Hartford Association of Realtors, and the Real Estate Exchange. The Economic Development Department assists property owners and brokers to market commercial properties in Berlin and they maintain a membership in SiteFinder, a statewide commercial real estate web site maintained by the quasi-public Connecticut Economic Resource Center.

December 17, 2009

To: Denise McNair, Town Manger

From: Jim Mahoney

Re: Economic Development Department Performance Objectives

Following are proposed performance objectives for the next fiscal year.

1. Apply for 2 grants to advance the recommendations of the capital improvement program and the Plan of Conservation and Development implementation recommendations.
2. Participate in the administration of grants awarded including 5 STEAP grants and environmental assessment assistance for the Kensington Orchards and 889 Farmington Avenue properties.
3. Conduct 24 business visits as part of the Town economic development retention program.
4. Sponsor or participate in 6 economic development marketing activities such as the annual broker's breakfast, the Berlin Chamber Annual Meeting and Holiday Gathering, IOREBA events, an International Council of Shopping Centers Meeting in Hartford, and MetroHarford Alliance and CEDAS marketing and networking events.
5. Assist businesses to locate and expand in Berlin with a goal of assisting 30 business and development projects.
6. Work to expand the supply of available business sites through working with property owners in TEDS areas and infill and redevelopment sites.
7. Implement the Town's economic development incentive programs with a goal of assisting with 6 tax partnership applications and 2 infrastructure loans.
8. Assist the Town with real estate acquisition activities consistent with Plan of Conservation and Development including addressing the statements of need for the High School and the new Police Station. Continue to assist on acquisition and donation of smaller open space parcels and/or easements related to open space.
9. Continue efforts to stimulate development of the Train Station area as a node of commercial activity including completing the design phase for Train Station Improvements.
10. Advance any CIP projects that received funding including possibly new street signs.

11. Continue to work with the developer CIL to complete the Town's redevelopment plan for the Mills at Sherwood Falls.
12. Assist the marketing of major facilities vacated by business dislocations including Hartford Direct, SAM's, AW Direct and Bayer.
13. Assist Public Works Department to complete phase I of Berlin Veterans Park project.
14. Assist Public Works Department to complete phase I of streetscape project.
15. Assist Public Works Department to complete clean up of 1567 Berlin Turnpike (front of Sage Park) and to secure cost reimbursement from the Town's insurance policy.
16. Assist the Planning and Zoning Commission to start the process to update the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development.
17. Provide continuing staff support to the Conservation Commission to advance improvements to trails, parking and signage for Town open space parcels.



## Priorities and Status Implementation Plan for Berlin Plan of Conservation and Development 7-03 EDC 3-11

Priority	#	Recommendation	Responsible Entity	Target date	Status March 2011
6	2.63	Prepare a strategy to improve gateway entrances into and within the Town	Economic Development Commission	Jul-03	\$30,000 appropriated for this project. Sign design was approved. 2011 construction expected.
3	3.16	The Town should encourage property owners in TEDs areas to work together on issues regarding sale and future development of the properties	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	This process is ongoing. Some of the TEDS have already been developed. We should identify if there is a particular TEDS area that needs to be addressed.
2	3.17	The Town should assist private property owners to market properties consistent with the uses proposed in the Plan	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	Marketing assistance to property owners includes membership in CERC SiteFinder system, brokers breakfasts, IOREBA and ICSC events.
2	3.6	Facilitate clean up and reuse of brownfields sites through efforts including Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund, seeking funding for site assessments and use of strategies such as sale of tax liens to address tax delinquent brownfields sites and tax	Town Council, Economic Development Commission	ongoing	Work has been ongoing on brownfields property redevelopment. The Legion Square project is a brownfields site. This project was assisted by a CT CDA grant relying on tax increment financing for repayment. Also an EPA TSA was done for a phase I/II for the 889 Farmington Avenue property and an EPA grant through CRCOG has been secured to fund an ongoing phase III ESA.
4	3.8	Encourage reinvestment in the Farmington Avenue/Town Center Core Areas through increased Town support to marketing of real estate opportunities and through obtaining grants for public improvements that will help attract development	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	Marketing efforts included demographic profile of the area. About \$2.4 million in State and local grants have been obtained to accomplish the solid waste closure and construction of Berlin Veterans Memorial Park and \$485,000 for Streetscape improvements. \$650,000 in Brownfields Redevelopment Authority tax increment financing grants were provided to the Legion Square project.
4	3.9	Support retail growth in the Farmington Avenue area through increased Town support to marketing of real estate opportunities, through zoning changes and through modifications to the town's tax incentives policies	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	Changed zone of remaining industrial zoned Farmington Avenue frontage properties to CCD. Modified Town tax incentive policy to include retail redevelopment projects.
9	5.13	Work with providers to achieve delivery of services to all commercial and industrial areas	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	Utility extensions, some with the help of Town incentives, have been done on a project by project basis.
7	5.4	Apply for grants and seek assistance to upgrade the train station and its site	Economic Development Commission	Dec-02	About \$2.0 million in grant fund were secured for this project.
1	6.10	Promote the redevelopment of the block bounded by Farmington Avenue, Porters Pass, and Massiro Drive as a Town Center by seeking grants and working with private property owners on marketing and development issues	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	The Veterans Park solid waste closure project is complete and phase I of the park improvements is 90% complete, including flood plain mitigation. Additional funding has been approved for phase IA of the Park to extend the walkway toward Massiro Drive and to make other improvements. The Lions Club donated the gazebo. The Sand and Sall storage facility was relocated.

## Priorities and Status Implementation Plan for Berlin Plan of Conservation and Development 7-03 EDC 3-11

7	6.11	Promote the redevelopment of the Train Station area as a major development node for the commercial core area by seeking grants and working with private property owners on marketing and development issues	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	About \$2.0 million in grant funds were secured for the Train Station project. The Train Station project is moving to the final design phase. The Town has also initiated a dialogue with Connecticut DOT concerning its planned expansion of the Train Station parking lot related to the planned commuter and Intercity rail.
5	6.12	Include funding of streetscape improvements for the commercial core area in the Town's capital improvement program, and aggressively pursue grants to implement these recommendations	Town Council, Economic Development Commission	Dec-05	The streetscape program was included in the Town CIP and funded for the first time in FY 06. \$550,000 in grants have been obtained for the streetscape program and phase I of the streetscape project is 95% complete.
5	6.13	Prepare a parking and streetscape plan for the triangle bounded by Main Street, Kensington, Farmington Avenue, and New Britain Road	Economic Development Commission	Dec-05	Some streetscape work was completed but no progress has been made on the parking plan.
4	6.15	Continue the Town efforts to investigate and clean up environmental contamination of properties in the commercial core area, particularly along and near Farmington Avenue	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	Work has been ongoing on brownfields property redevelopment. The Legion Square project is a brownfields site. This project was assisted by a CT CDA grant relying on tax increment financing for repayment. Also an EPA TSA was done for a phase III for the 889 Farmington Avenue property and an EPA grant through CROG has been secured to fund an ongoing phase III ESA.
10	6.16	Develop a strategy to encourage the redevelopment and upgrade of properties along Bruce, Washington, Willard and Columbus Avenues	Economic Development Commission	Dec-04	No action taken to date.
11	6.18	Consider strategic acquisition of properties by the Town for small scale office and retail development.	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	Ciamella properties were under contract to the Town. The Town decided not to acquire the properties. The Town now has contracts to purchase the Kensington Furniture properties. The Town also foreclosed on 889 Farmington Avenue.
7	6.3	Improve the rail station and parking area so that it represents an asset to the commuter rail system and an appropriate gateway to Berlin	Economic Development Commission	Dec-05	This is part of the Train Station project.
5	6.4	Prepare a streetscape plan for the commercial core area	Economic Development Commission	Dec-05	A concept plan for streetscape was prepared and phase I implementation is nearing completion. The plan will need to be updated after phase I is completed.
5	6.5	Implement the streetscape plan for the commercial core area in stages over time	Economic Development Commission	ongoing	Phase I of the project is nearing completion.
8	6.6	Improve the overall environment of the commercial core area by preparing concept designs and guidelines for improvements of building facades and landscaping on the private side of street right of ways	Economic Development Commission	Dec-04	Work has not started on this item. It has been incorporated into the Town's CIP but has not been funded.

## Priorities and Status Implementation Plan for Berlin Plan of Conservation and Development 7-03 EDC 3-11

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