

**REVISED DRAFT MINUTES
BROOKFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, December 16, 2014 7:00 PM – Room 209**

1. Convene Meeting: Chair Hal Kurfehs called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM, with the following in attendance:

Present: Chair Hal Kurfehs; Secretary Dave Matte; Commissioner Greg Dembowski; Commissioner Nancy Tolmoff

Absent: Commissioner Jim Fisher

Also Present: Ron Jaffe, Nelson Malwitz, Recording Secretary Emily Cole Prescott

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes (11/18/14): Secretary Matte made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Dembowski seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

3. Nomination & Election of Officers: Chair Kurfehs stated that either the Nominations and Elections could be done, or only the Nominations could be done. **Secretary Matte nominated Greg Dembowski for the Vice Chairmanship. Commissioner Tolmoff nominated Hal Kurfehs for the Chairmanship. Chair Hal nominated Dave Matte as Secretary.** Commissioner Dembowski stated that if he is going to be Vice Chair, he would like the EDC to have a goal and a strategy, which means having a plan and which means eventually working toward creating metrics. He stated that he would really like to put his efforts and collective efforts into a business plan for economic development. Commissioner Dembowski stated that he would like to have a goal to work toward and have an actionable plan in which to work together. Chair Hal Kurfehs stated that he has no problem with the discussion of a strategy, but the strategy should recognize that the EDC is a volunteer board. Commissioner Dembowski agreed that the Board should work on something that can be delivered. Chair Kurfehs stated that with the FHI and the POCD there had always been a recommendation to have staff help for this Commission.

Chair Kurfehs asked for other nominees, and there were none.

Chair Kurfehs asked for all those who were in favor of Chair Kurfehs for Chairman, Greg Dembowski as Vice Chairman, and Dave Matte as Secretary, all in favor. The Commission voted in favor of the elections.

4. Discussion of Metrics Creation: Commissioner Dembowski stated that he has spoken with the Northeastern Connecticut Developers Association regarding the potential creation of metrics. His suggestion was that before the metrics are determined, the EDC should have a plan, strategy and action steps to create the metrics. Commissioner Dembowski stated that the Commission has not yet determined its goal in moving forward. Chair Kurfehs stated that Main Street Connecticut had hosted some speakers who were discussing financing through taxes, and he explained how this tax financing would work. The metrics could be net gain, business starts, relocations, expansions, net jobs, building, rehabilitations, renovations, buildings sold, private acquisitions, total volunteer hours contributed, but what might work for EDC might be something completely different than what was mentioned above. Chair Kurfehs asked what the EDC wants to learn, follow up and measure, and he also asked about what is important to

Brookfield. Commissioner Dembowski has asked K. Daniel for the list of largest, commercially undeveloped pieces of land in Brookfield. Commissioner Dembowski asked that the EDC might consider one of their metrics as getting these undeveloped properties developed. Commissioner Dembowski asked if this Commission has any role in helping to get the largest, undeveloped parcels moving forward. Commissioner Dembowski stated that he has spoken with K. Daniel about the business inventory in Brookfield, and he had been emailed a spreadsheet of the list, which is over 900 lines long. There are 500 businesses in Brookfield, with a total of over three million square feet of commercial space. Commissioner Dembowski stated that for the 500 additional businesses there are only 27 emails on the business inventory list. Commissioner Dembowski stated that a metric could be to contact the new businesses.

Upon inquiry about the contact list, E. Cole Prescott replied that there are 218 Constant Contact emails in the EDC list, and there were 174 views on the website in November 2014.

Secretary Matte stated that he had been speaking with other Towns regarding EDCs, and personal contact with developers and businesses is important. Chair Kurfehs asked for the role of the Town's EDC group, and he believes that the role is to make the businesses successful, and to retain the current businesses. Commissioner Dembowski asked if the efforts should be focused on business incubation, or to make the businesses here more successful.

Commissioner Dembowski stated that Nelson Malwitz is present tonight to speak about business incubation. Chair Kurfehs stated that at this point he does not see Brookfield building up a business incubator program. Commissioner Tolmoff stated that she would like to see vacant spaces filled with new businesses. Commissioner Dembowski stated that this is another discussion about where to centralize this Commission's efforts. Chair Kurfehs stated that there are thirty or more commercial brokers in the area that are looking to fill vacant spots. Chair Kurfehs referenced the article, *Inside Business*, which was posted in *The Danbury News Times* in the December edition. Chair Kurfehs stated that Connecticut is a very difficult State to grow in, as the prices are quite high. Chair Kurfehs stated that economic development needs to be done as a region. He mentioned that programs in the areas could also be promoted regional-wide. This leaves the most important part for the towns and cities, which is to develop and keep what is had here and make it successful. Commissioner Dembowski stated that if the Commission determines this to be the strategy, there should be a conscious decision to move forward with a plan. Secretary Matte stated that Brookfield should have an identity in its own right. Secretary Matte stated that Brookfield's identity should be branded. Commissioner Dembowski stated that the website was an effort to brand the Town. Chair Kurfehs mentioned that this conversation should be added to the next meeting agenda, and asked someone from the Commission to draft a strategy for the next meeting's discussion.

Chair Kurfehs stated that by the next meeting everyone should have a paragraph about the proposed strategy, which the EDC can then use to edit and create the overall strategy. Chair Kurfehs mentioned that perhaps a report could be drafted by the EDC every few months for information about what the EDC has been doing. Commissioner Dembowski stated that he cannot be present at the next meeting, in January. He stated that he will send his paragraph draft to the Commissioners.

Nelson Malwitz: Mr. Malwitz stated that what seems to be missing is complete inventory of properties. The list which Community Development Director Katherine Daniel gave Commissioner Dembowski is incomplete, and Commissioner Dembowski stated that the list is a work in progress, and he noted other properties which are not being utilized, such as the Sandy Lane units, and the properties in the front of the cemetery (450-460 Federal Road). Chair Kurfehs stated that most people believe that the approvals lead directly to building, but the financing and the next steps are the most important and difficult. Mr. Malwitz stated that some metrics that may be useful: retention of businesses, growth of businesses, new business coming in. New businesses that are coming in have not been highlighted to date, and should be. Mr. Malwitz stated that retention is important. Commissioner Dembowski showed the flier for Nelson Merhcan's workshop. Mr. Malwitz stated that what other businesses are doing could be highlighted to share success stories, such as successful methods for the top Mexican restaurants, etc. Commissioner Dembowski stated that the plan to move forward to create metrics needs to be first put together, than brought to the First Selectman for review. Nelson Malwitz stated that retention should be measured, as well as the grand list evaluated. Mr. Malwitz stated that something else is the time to approval for applications, which has been historically quite long. Chair Kurfehs stated that George Benson is the Director of Planning in Newtown, and he shared a timeline of the permitting flow which is much shorter than in **Brookfield**. Mr. Malwitz mentioned that the Development Services Team is a new, positive aspect to move forward on this time to approval matter.

Mr. Malwitz stated that if the speaker series were hosted, people who are interested in the business development in Brookfield could learn more about these matters. Commissioner Dembowski stated that Bob Neil of the Four Corners Association should be contacted regarding this matter. Mr. Malwitz stated that through the Four Corners Association, email contacts should be obtained, and then information about the speaker series could be sent. Mr. Malwitz stated that a dynamic group that meets every other week or so is MBI. Commissioner Dembowski stated that Betsy McIlvaine stated she has some knowledge about the subject, and he stated that he will be contacting Betsy about this matter. Commissioner Dembowski stated that there are "angel investors" in Town who may be willing to give space for business incubators. Mr. Malwitz stated that one thing learned at the National Incubator Conference was that to do it well will take a major commitment, and Danbury used \$600,000 to fix one place, and there would still be need for staffing and outfitting of the space. Chair Kurfehs stated that the library should be a community center, and may be able to provide an office and meet-up space. One facet of the incubation area is to get people together who work from their homes, and is a lesser requirement for funding, and could be the start of a business incubation program. Commissioner Tolmoff stated that if the library were in the Four Corners, that library could be a central piece to the incubation program. Mr. Malwitz stated that if something wanted to be done with high energy, this smaller incubation program could be a start for the Commission. The EDC thanked Mr. Malwitz for his contribution.

Ron Jaffe stated that the Commission should try to figure out what people need, and what people want to hear about. Mr. Jaffe stated that the cost of the sign on the highway logo program is quite high, and asked what the EDC can do to this matter, such as an outreach to the State about this matter. He suggested working with state representatives to determine what is needed in the Town. Mr. Malwitz stated that this could be a great contribution. Chair Kurfehs stated that the

EDC should try to be smart with what is done, as this is a volunteer Commission. Commissioner Dembowski stated that perhaps the next step is to go to the Board of Selectmen to move forward with filling vacancies for the Commissions.

5. Discussion on Development of Regular Series of Business Educational Events:

Commissioner Dembowski stated that the last workshop was not well attended, and Commissioner Dembowski stated that the last email that was sent did not reach the other Commissions. Chair Kurfehs stated that each of the Commissioner's emails is available on a live link through the Town's website, and he could send to all of the commissioners an email to get them involved in EDC. Commissioner Dembowski stated that the Commissioners should be told that their names be added to the list, and tell them that they can unsubscribe if they choose.

6. Update on Website Functioning & Newsletter Contact List: See above. Commissioner Dembowski stated that there are only 27 of 500 email addresses on the list which he had received from Community Development Director K. Daniel. The Commission asked that E. Cole Prescott download the list of current Constant Contact emails, and send for comparison. Commissioner Dembowski stated that the event should be scheduled as soon as possible, and he noted that the Board of Selectmen should also be contacted regarding any upcoming event. Nelson Merchan will attend and host an event for free. Chair Kurfehs stated that he has spoken with a computer firm about speakers, and they are very interested in following up on this matter. The Commission agreed to host the next event on March 24th. Commissioner Dembowski stated that Chair Kurfehs will work on inviting the Land Use Commissioners. E. Cole Prescott mentioned that the last meeting video is now posted on Video on Demand on the Town's website, under the "Other" tab. Commissioner Dembowski will speak with Bob Neil from the Four Corners Association. Commissioner Dembowski stated that he will work on compiling email addresses with K. Daniel. Commissioner Dembowski asked E. Cole Prescott to reserve Room 133 for the event, with the meeting at 6:00 or 6:30, and the event to be held at 7:00 PM. Commissioner Dembowski stated that he will get the refreshments again for the event.

7. 4-Corners Development Discussion: The assessment deferral was briefly discussed.

8. Other Discussion: Website: Chair Kurfehs asked about the prominence of the Business Incubator on the homepage. Mr. Malwitz stated that it is probably something secondary instead of primary, at this point. Chair Kurfehs stated that from an EDC perspective, he is not sure that it is top priority now. Commissioner Dembowski suggested that the matter be discussed with the First Selectman.

Upon inquiry from Mr. Kurfehs, E. Cole Prescott replied that much of the emails received from the website are spam-related.

9. Adjourn: Commissioner Tolmoff made a motion to adjourn, and Commissioner Dembowski seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.