

DRAFT MINUTES
BROOKFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, February 17, 2015 7:00 PM – Room 209

- 1. Convene Meeting:** Chair Hal Kurfehs called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM with the following in attendance:

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

Absent: Commissioner Jim Fisher

Also Present: Susan Murphy of the Chamber of Commerce; Recording Secretary E. Cole Prescott

- 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes (12/16/14):** Vice Chair Dembowski made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 16th meeting as submitted by Emily [Cole Prescott]. Commissioner Tolmoff seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.
- 3. Discussion of Strategy/Metrics Creation and review of EDC Member Drafts:** Chair Kurfehs stated that he feels as though metrics creation is a bit premature, and he believes the EDC should be totally aware of what is happening in Brookfield (per the Danbury model), as a first step. Chair Kurfehs mentioned that he is not sure if the information on which to start creating metrics is currently available. Secretary Matte stated that he believes a strategy, rather than metrics creation, is more viable at this point. Secretary Matte stated that the Bethel EDC Director had some great ideas about how to create a strategy plan. Secretary Matte mentioned that any first step should be to maintain and grow the current businesses, and the next step should be to create a friendly environment to attract new business, especially due to the cost of doing business in Connecticut. Vice Chair Dembowski stated that the question is “what’s Brookfield’s long-term vision”? Is it mixed use, or is it to grow the Town wherever it will grow? Commissioner Tolmoff mentioned that the location for tourism is ideal, due to Brookfield’s vicinity to other well-traveled areas. She also mentioned the benefits of the three bodies of water for recreational purposes – Candlewood Lake, Lake Lillinonah, the Still River. Vice Chair Dembowski noted that Commissioner Tolmoff’s suggestions seem to be about how to brand Brookfield.

The Commission took a moment to introduce Susan Murphy.

Secretary Matte stated that he likes the idea of Brookfield as a tourism destination, but he would prefer to focus on growth of the Town’s tax base. By having this growth as the focus, some of the weight of tax burden is taken off the homeowners, and overall the Town would be able to offer more services for all taxpayers.

Chair Kurfehs stated that he had written an article in the past about the difference of the residential and commercial tax bases and use of services. Chair Kurfehs stated that commercial/industrial development tends to use 25% of the services, but pays for

approximately 75% of the tax base. The residential base generally uses approximately 75% of Town services, but pays 25% of the total tax base.

Susan Murphy mentioned the Western CT Fairfield Council of Tourism as a resource, relative to Commissioner Tolmoff's suggestion of tourism for Brookfield. Susan Murphy stated that Candlewood East Marina's primary customers are not from Brookfield. Chair Kurfehs mentioned the presentation hosted last year by the EDC, and noted the positive aspects of Brookfield that were mentioned by the presenters during that presentation. Susan Murphy noted the benefits of Brookfield's location. She also noted that people must travel through Brookfield to get to surrounding locations and destinations.

Chair Kurfehs stated that if there is a good environment and quality of life, tourism comes as a result of that quality of life. He mentioned that perhaps the need is to consider improvement to the current quality of life.

Susan Murphy stated that Brookfield does not have small B&Bs in Town. Ms. Murphy stated that the Craft Center brings people in from all over, and it would be great to have tourists stay overnight in the Town. She noted that many of the Craft Center's current visitors stay overnight at the Ethan Allen.

Vice Chair Dembowski asked if there is a common vision for Brookfield on which the EDC may move forward with drafting a strategy. Chair Kurfehs stated that Ms. Murphy has asked him to write an article for the quarterly Chamber magazine, and he stated that he hopes this piece will be helpful to review with the EDC to move forward on this topic. Vice Chair Dembowski asked when this piece is due, and Ms. Murphy responded that the article is due on March 10th.

Chair Kurfehs suggested that this discussion be reviewed in conjunction with the article he will write for discussion at the next EDC meeting in March.

Secretary Matte stated that he thinks the tax base should be diversified with the goal to expand commercial development. Chair Kurfehs noted that retail development throughout the Town is good, and has potential. The office spaces have not grown significantly, and the industrial use throughout the Town – similar to industrial uses throughout the State – have not grown. Chair Kurfehs clarified that when he refers to industrial space he is referencing advanced manufacturing uses.

Chair Kurfehs mentioned that one of the findings of the focus group that was tasked as part of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region found that one of the reasons industrial development is lacking is due to the lack of trained people for the work force. Chair Kurfehs also mentioned that the Housatonic Valley Community College expansion may help to offer a solution to the lack of a properly trained work force.

The other option Chair Kurfehs noted is to view clusters of development, which really cannot be done on a Town basis.

Susan Murphy stated that she thinks the Commission would be surprised by the number of light industrial spaces throughout the Town.

Vice Chair Dembowski stated that the action for the Commission to go away with tonight is to review Chair Kurfehs's piece in conjunction with this evening's discussion to determine how these pieces may fit together into some sort of vision statement.

Commissioner Tolmoff stated that she received a phone call, complimenting the EDC on its website.

- 4. Series of Business Educational Events:** Chair Kurfehs asked Susan Murphy to speak about the Chamber. Chair Kurfehs stated that the Greater Danbury Chamber hosts a series of lectures on various topics including marketing, websites, search engine optimization, and branding. Chair Kurfehs stated that Newtown is hosting how to start your own business, ABCs of the business plan, how to market and search for bids. Susan Murphy noted that in the Spring and Fall, Bethel, Newtown and Brookfield host workshops on various business-related topics. She mentioned that there is no cost to attend these workshops. Upon inquiry from Vice Chair Dembowski, Susan Murphy replied that business owners are alerted of these workshops if they are part of the Chamber of Commerce's lists. About twenty-percent of Brookfield business owners are Chamber members. Susan Murphy mentioned that most of the businesses in the Four Corners are part of the Brookfield Chamber of Commerce.

Chair Kurfehs stated that he is concerned about the number of events on a multiplicity of topics offered to a limited audience. Vice Chair Dembowski stated that the EDC is attempting to build its own contact list. Vice Chair Dembowski asked if there is a fee to join the Chamber, and Susan Murphy replied in the affirmative. Vice Chair Dembowski stated that the EDC list contains only the Brookfield businesses. Vice Chair Dembowski stated that he had contacted all of the Four Corners business owners and had sent them all an email to be added to the Constant Contact list. E. Cole Prescott will upload these email addresses into the Constant Contact list. Commissioner Tolmoff asked if there is anything else to be done, and Vice Chair Dembowski replied that the list that K. Daniel has given him has phone numbers, not email addresses. He mentioned that the full list of businesses throughout the Town should be contacted to acquire email address contact information and other relevant contact information.

Chair Kurfehs mentioned that he had visited a computer business on Federal Road, and had spoken to the President about the possibility of creating several computer topic events for business owners. Vice Chair Dembowski stated that he believes it would make sense for the EDC and the Chamber of Commerce to work together to promote each other's events. Susan Murphy stated that the Chamber would like to cooperate with the EDC.

The location of the next EDC event was discussed. The event will be hosted on March 24th by Nelson Merchan in the Town Hall, Meeting Room 133, starting at 7:00 PM. E. Cole Prescott stated that she will check with the IT Department to determine if a portion

of the meeting video from the last event may be edited and included in the announcement for the event on March 24th.

Susan Murphy will share information about the Chamber's upcoming event, and the EDC will likewise share information for marketing about its upcoming event(s).

Chair Kurfehs stated that one of the items discussed in the past was the business incubator, but the business incubator has too much prominence on the website considering the lack of progress. The Commission briefly discussed Danbury's business incubator program, which is regional.

Chair Kurfehs thanked Susan Murphy for her time, and she left the meeting.

- **March 24th: Nelson Merchan, Small Business Development Center & Promotional Effort:** Vice Chair Dembowski reviewed that for the March 24th event, all of the Land Use Commissions and the Four Corners list will be sent the email notification about the event. Vice Chair Dembowski and Chair Kurfehs discussed whether Nelson Merchan's attendance has been confirmed for March 24th. Upon inquiry from E. Cole Prescott, Chair Kurfehs replied that the presentation should start at 7:00 PM, and the EDC meeting is to begin at 6:00 PM. E. Cole Prescott will send a note to reserve the meeting starting at 6:00, rather than the current reservation at 6:30. The event is to run from 7:00 to 8:30. Chair Kurfehs mentioned that a PR article could be sent to *The News Times*. Vice Chair Dembowski asked about the possibility of asking Nelson Merchan to send a mailer about this event. E. Cole Prescott will send an email to Chair Kurfehs regarding how many addresses are on the business directory list. Chair Kurfehs stated that an email blast will be done soon, and then again right before the meeting as a reminder. Vice Chair Dembowski stated that the task would now be to add the websites and email addresses to the EDC contact list. Vice Chair Dembowski also mentioned that the email notification should indicate that refreshments will be served.
 - **Discuss Brookfield, Newtown, and Bethel Chambers Lecture Events/Possible Cooperation:** *This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.*
 - **Discussion of Cooperation for the Lecture Series with guest Susan Murphy, Executive Director of the Brookfield Chamber of Commerce:** *This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.*
5. **Update on Website Functioning & Newsletter Contact List:** Vice Chair Dembowski noted that the information about the business incubator needs to be changed.
6. **Other Discussion:**
- **Four Corners:** Chair Kurfehs stated that apartments are planned in the northwest quadrant in the area of the bowling alley. A donation of a parcel of land is also planned in conjunction with the development, the purpose for which would be the construction of a library and community center/space.
 - **Information for March 24th Event:** Chair Kurfehs will draft a newsletter for the upcoming event.

- 7. Adjourn: Vice Chair Dembowski made a motion to adjourn at 8:15 PM. Secretary Matte seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.**