

DRAFT MINUTES
BROOKFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, May 17, 2016 ROOM 209
7:00 PM

1. Convene Meeting: Chair Kurfehs convened the meeting at 7:00 PM.
Present: Chair Kurfehs; Secretary Matte; Commissioner Fisher; Commissioner Rositano; Commissioner M. Doré
Absent: Vice Chair Dembowski; Commissioner LaTerra
Also Present: Recording Secretary Emily Cole Prescott

2. Discussion with First Selectman Steve Dunn regarding Town Center Development –
Secretary Matte stated that he had heard from First Selectman Steve Dunn, who indicated that he would not be able to attend this evening’s meeting. Chair Kurfehs mentioned the email he sent to First Selectman Steve Dunn, in an effort to “clear the air” regarding comments which had been made at the previous Board of Selectmen’s meeting. Chair Kurfehs stated that the EDC is open-minded, and is trying to ask questions. Chair Kurfehs stated that both he and Commissioner Fisher are worried about timing and pricing of underground utilities work in the Four Corners area. Secretary Matte stated that the quotes for the work should be obtained, and the people of the Town should be given the option to vote on the matter. He mentioned the importance of considering long-term planning. Chair Kurfehs stated that the Town has to spend almost \$300,000 to get the quote, and if it goes to vote, and fails in referendum, the amount spent to obtain the quote would be wasted. He noted that a referendum would take both time and money. He indicated that the developers of Brookfield Village have a new deadline of September 2017, and they may not make this deadline with the timeline they are now on. Chair Kurfehs noted the importance of considering what is under construction in surrounding towns. He indicated that the number of units approved and ready to be built in Brookfield is close to 500. Chair Kurfehs pointed out that there will not be enough retail space developed unless there is enough housing to support the other commercial uses throughout the area. Secretary Matte indicated that the ultimate goal is to develop what is best for the Town. Secretary Matte stated that if it takes one year longer for the development to get going in the Four Corners, he would be willing to take that chance to ensure that all of the information has been considered and the best development moves forward. He shared that people are more willing to take the time to ensure the work is done according to the Plan of Conservation and Development. Commissioner Fisher stated that he has brought his concerns of the underground utilities to the Board of Selectmen, as a private resident. He asked that all Commissioners sitting at the table indicate whether they have spoken with any business owners in the Town Center District about the underground utilities project cost. All Commissioners indicated that they had not spoken with business owners in the Town Center. Chair Kurfehs clarified that he had spoken previously at the EDC’s March meeting about his speaking with two contractors he knows, who indicated that such a project would cost closer to \$10 million. Since that meeting, he has not spoken with business owners about the cost of the underground utilities project. *Paul LaTerra had sent an email to E. Cole Prescott, at the request of Commissioner Fisher, also indicating that he had not spoken to any business owners in the Town Center District.* Commissioner Fisher stated that the email sent by Chair

Kurfehs on February 23rd to First Selectman Steve Dunn did not represent the full Commission's opinion, as it was sent by Chair Kurfehs as a resident. Chair Kurfehs stated that the purpose of the email was to ask First Selectman Dunn questions about the project so the EDC could have the option to discuss the answers at their upcoming meetings. Commissioner Fisher noted that he is concerned that if the underground utilities are not pursued, the money spent to obtain the quotes would be wasted. Additionally, there was concern expressed about the possibility of the Brookfield Village project not moving forward, and the buildings sitting as empty space for years. Commissioner Fisher noted that the Still River Greenway is "great news" for the downtown. Commissioner Rositano indicated that Brookfield cannot be compared to Stamford, CT and other such locations. Commissioner Fisher stated that if the decision had to be made between voting for new library construction or for underground utilities in the Town Center, he would vote for new library construction. Upon questioning the economic return of such a project, Chair Kurfehs mentioned that the numbers cannot be quantified. Secretary Matte urged the Commission to gather more information, and to let the voters have the option to make the decision. Secretary Matte stated that there should be some part of economic theory used to review planning for the future, to set a vision to make the economics fit the vision. Secretary Matte indicated that the ideas should be considered. Commissioner Rositano asked about the possibility of other businesses in the area requesting underground utilities installation, if this project moves forward. Chair Kurfehs mentioned the possibility of having benefit assessments for the additional work, if that became the case. Commissioner Fisher stated that he would have liked to have seen an ad-hoc committee to review the Eversource quote expense in addition to other Town Center matters moving forward. There was a brief discussion about the expenditure of \$196,000 without discussion during an open meeting. It was noted that normally, an Executive leader is permitted to make certain expense decisions. Commissioner Fisher stated that when discussions are stopped, democracy on all levels is stopped. Commissioner Fisher mentioned that the video of the Board of Selectmen's meeting may be viewed online. Commissioner Rositano expressed interest in what type of space may be developed in the Town Center, and Chair Kurfehs explained some of the history of the Zoning regulations and his work to encourage some of the Zoning regulations to be changed as to not have too much of the same type of use in the area, as the competition would be too great, and businesses would not remain open. E. Cole Prescott suggested that Commissioner Rositano review the Town Center District section of the Zoning Commission's Table of Permitted Uses document, which is available online. It was explained that the purpose of the EDC is to serve as an advisory board, to make recommendations to other boards and commissions. The EDC does not have specific authority, but can complete research. The topic of writing a letter from the Commission to the Board of Selectmen regarding an opinion about pursuing underground utilities was briefly discussed, but Commissioner Fisher replied that the Commission cannot write such a letter in good faith, as not all of the Commissioners agree on one opinion of the matter. Commissioner Rositano suggested writing an article for publication in the newspaper. Secretary Matte noted the importance of people throughout the Town working together. Commissioner Rositano suggested that each Commissioner attend the next meeting with thoughts, suggestions and concerns about the Town Center. Commissioner Fisher mentioned that the plans for the streetscape have now been re-done.

Commissioner Fisher also mentioned the importance of reading and being aware of the Zoning regulations, as there are consistent revisions.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes (04/19/16) – The minutes will be discussed at the next meeting, due to a lack of quorum on this matter at this meeting.
4. Update on Website Functioning & Newsletter Contact List –
 - Detailed Description – Google Analytics Report – E. Cole Prescott presented a detailed report of the information about the EDC website collected via Google Analytics. Secretary Matte asked for the pages people are most viewing.
5. Information for News & “Blurb” Write-Ups – None.
6. Other Discussion – WestCOG has a grant in aid – Chair Kurfehs shared that there may be a grant available for which the Town may want to apply, and he indicated that he would send this information to Greg Dembowski for review. He also reviewed some data from a recent conference he had attended.
7. Adjournment – **At 9:02 PM, Commissioner M. Doré made a motion to close the meeting. Secretary Matte seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.**

Next regularly scheduled Economic Development Commission meeting: 06/21/16