

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
CHESHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Tuesday, October 20, 2020
8:00 A.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Commissioners Present:

William Stanley, Derek Gromko, Don Dobbs, Dan O’Connell, David Pelletier

Absent:

Steve Sidoruk, Peter Nichols

Staff Present:

Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Guests: Susan Lonczak – Chief Sanitarian, Chesprocott Health District, Yetta Augur and Mark Thomas, Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, David Borowy, Town Council Liaison

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Stanley called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called.

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

A quorum was determined.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Regular Meeting – September 15, 2020

Mr. Pelletier made a motion to accept minutes for regular meeting – September 15, 2020. Mr. O’Connell seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

No communications.

VII. Business

a) Discussion with Chesprocott Health District – Susan Lonczak, Chief Sanitarian

A discussion took place about the challenges of the pandemic for Chesprocott and local businesses. Currently COVID-19 numbers are showing an uptick and are similar to what that were in June. An increase in social gatherings and getting back to regular activities may be contributing to the uptick.

Guidelines are in place for visits to businesses. The first visit is general where there is a discussion about the business, questions asked, problems addressed. The second visit establishes a timeframe to correct problems/violations. The third visit initiates orders and fines. Retail establishments are in good shape for the most part. Restaurants, now at 75% capacity, present challenges and opportunities. “What if” scenarios are addressed and how to work through them.

Susan and her team assist with re-evaluation of business plans and using creativity for social distancing. They are making sure that businesses are compliant while recognizing the need to be accommodating and reassuring. The team is very approachable, flexible and proactive. State guidelines are not specific and are continually being reworked. Establishments are addressed “case by case” based on size and to fit “live” situations, i.e., designing Plexiglas partitions, 6 feet spacing, etc. Restaurants are struggling with indoor dining social distancing, i.e., hostess check-in areas with patrons arriving at the same time. They are hiring more staff with less money.

The \$5,000 relief grant for small businesses from the state will be looked into. To date, restaurants are on their own to purchase partitions and other safety needs.

Commission members thanked Susan for her tireless efforts assisting businesses and keeping the town safe.

b) Speakers for Future Meetings

A representative from APEX invited to speak said that it is not in a position to address issues experienced by internet customers in Cheshire. Mr. Sitko will reach out to Peter Talbot from Cox Communications and Frontier Communications.

Please contact Mr. Sitko with suggestions for future guest speakers.

c) Long-Term Recovery Activities

Yetta Augur and Jerry Sitko have developed ideas to encourage Cheshire residents to support local businesses.

Key initiatives are:

- **Videos of businesses** showing modifications made to keep patrons safe. Clem Kasinskas, videographer at Bozzutto's, will be filming at Olive & Harry, Cappola-Brokaw Art of Hair, Main Street Café, 129 on Main Salon and Spa, Paws, Red Owl, Vespucci's and the YMCA on October 22 and 26. Videos will be run on the town and chamber's websites and social media.
- **\$50.00 VISA gift cards** campaign will run at Cheshire restaurants from October 23 through November 29. Residents who spend \$25.00 or more can submit their receipts to be eligible to win one of four \$50.00 VISA gift cards.
- **Small Business Saturday** is on November 28. Signs will be located in front of businesses on Route 10 and throughout town to encourage residents to Shop Cheshire during the holidays.
- **Light Up Cheshire** will run through the holiday season to bring positivity and uplift to town. It is proposed to begin on Thanksgiving weekend. Businesses are encouraged to light up their windows during the holiday season.

d) Liaison Reports

David Bowery, town council liaison, said that revenues are good.

Mark Thomas, from the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, said that judging for the scarecrow event will take place on Wednesday, October 21. The entry fee is \$25.00. Registration deadline was September 28. Wednesday, October 21, is National Chamber of Commerce Day. The best way to honor this organization is to support local chamber businesses.

e) Coordinator's Report

- ReRead Books – An outlet providing employment opportunities to young adults with special needs, has applied for a special permit for a training facility in the Watch Factory building. The outlet will be operated by the Connecticut Community Empowerment Foundation and will occupy a 1,600 square foot store front area on the first level. The Planning and Zoning Commission had no concerns regarding this application. The special permit fee was waived by the town council.
- The Richard Chevrolet body shop will be moving to a newly constructed 25,000 square foot building on 16.31 acres north of Realty Drive. The Planning and Zoning Commission approved a special permit application for the project on September 14, 2020.
- Collins Aerospace – It is to be determined how salaried layoffs will affect operations at its facility in Cheshire. Collins, is a division of Raytheon (formerly United Technologies).
- Breweries
 - Counter Weight Brewing Company was approved last week by the Planning & Zoning Commission. It will be located at 7 Diana Court. It will include a tasting room, multiple brewing areas, packaging and canning areas, and a full bar and merchandising area. Outdoor dining and entertainment may occur.
 - Cheshire Craft Brewing – Construction to fit out the building is occurring. is. When it opens, it may be Cheshire's very first local brewery. Located at 125 Commerce Court, it hopes to open in early 2021.
- Ball & Socket Arts – The first remediation phase is completed and a pre-application was submitted for additional funding. The first remediation project came in under budget.
- Dragon Buffet Property – There are plans being developed for this property.
- Cheshire Chamber of Commerce – An article featured in The Cheshire Citizen said that the chamber is doing well and innovating to better serve its members. Some \$70,000 has been awarded in scholarships to deserving students; opportunities for non-profits - promotional mailings, chamber event

exposure, roundtables and networking. It has been a helpful resources during the pandemic providing information regarding the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), the government loan program for businesses. The importance of the chamber was reinforced by Jerry Sitko who said that Yetta Augur has energy and good ideas. The chamber brings strength, stability and growth to the business community.

- Money Magazine Recognition – Money Magazine has ranked Cheshire as the 28th best place to live in the U.S. Cheshire continues to provide residents with needed services and has been able to adjust and rally to the “new normal” with help from local officials and Governor Lamont. “Cheshire takes great pride in its community” wrote Sean Kimball, Town Manager, and is pleased with this recognition. In 2013, Cheshire was ranked 39th best town in the U.S.
- Blue Ribbon Honor – Norton Elementary School – The U.S. Department of Education awarded Norton Elementary School with a 2020 Blue Ribbon Honor. It excels in overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Norton is one of four Connecticut schools to receive this honor. DOE Secretary, Betsy DeVos, presented the award via video congratulating the school and recognizing the work done to meet student needs.
- Pandemic and Cheshire Businesses – September 17, 2020 Cheshire Herald Article. The article commended businesses on their resiliency to continue to operate during the pandemic. Most businesses have stayed “afloat”. Only several have had to close thus far. The Cheshire Herald has been visiting businesses over the past few months to see how they are faring through the pandemic. Businesses are now finding new ways to approach the future during these uncertain times. Jerry Sitko and Yetta Augur continue to convey to the community that it is safe to shop local.

VII. Adjournment

Mr. Stanley adjourned the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Dawn Guite, Recording Secretary, EDC