

# KILLINGLY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

**Regular Meeting  
Tuesday, October 6, 2015  
Killingly Town Hall  
Conference Room 102  
172 Main Street  
Killingly, CT**



Mark Tillinghast, Vice-Chairman, called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

1. Roll Call:

Members Present: Mark Tillinghast, Bill Cheng and Steve Gilbert.

Absent with notification: Dale Desmarais & Rand Joly. Absent: Kevin Cole.

Others Present: John Hallbergh, Town Council Liaison; Joyce Ricci, Alternate Town Council Liaison; Lyn Laberge and John Sarantopolous, Town Councilors; Sean Hendricks, Town Manager; Karen Clark, Zoning Officer; Eric Rumsey, Wetlands Agent; Elsie Bisset, Economic Development Director.

Mark Tillinghast appointed Steve Gilbert as a voting member.

2. Approval of Minutes:

**MOTION** to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting of September 1, 2015 was made by Bill Cheng. It was **SECONDED** by Steve Gilbert. The voice vote was **ALL IN FAVOR**.

3. Correspondence – None

4. Citizen's Participation – None

**MOTION** by Bill Cheng to move item 6 before item 5. **SECONDED** by Steve Gilbert. The voice vote was **ALL IN FAVOR**.

**MOTION** by Bill Cheng to allow everyone in the room to speak during the discussion of downtown. **SECONDED** by Steve Gilbert. The voice vote was **ALL IN FAVOR**.

6. New Business

a) Downtown Discussion: Jim Rivers began the discussion. He has owned property in downtown for 17 years. He has been seeking various towns to locate his business. Bad news is that statistically downtown is 50% vacant. Good news is that the sidewalks and flowers look great. Jim's building has been half vacant for 5-7 yrs and he is willing to rent for a competitive rate. Hard to find tenants and even harder to get and qualify for financing. Vacant buildings are a deterrent for financing. Jim suggests a theme of health care possibly because they are here already. What can we do to get more tenants into the buildings?

Mike Gaudreau has had a business here since 1948, the current problem is that people are hanging around; people are getting dropped off on Water Street behind buildings and are deterring customers and employees in the front and side of Deary's Gymnastics. When we had a police department we didn't have this problem. Two weeks ago the Troopers started giving tickets for loitering and this has kept many of them away.

Avery Tillinghast mentioned that he comes from a retail background since his family had a lumberyard here for many years. The trend for retail is to move out of downtowns to regional mall

areas. He suggests that the EDC continue to work on issues related to cultivating retail businesses.

John Hallbergh stated that police protection is an issue of which the Town Council is aware and in this regard they appointed a Special Commission on Law Enforcement Strategies. It is expected that this commission will offer its recommendation in December. There are also public safety issues in other parts of town, not just downtown. The biggest problem is us; people that live here think less of the town than people from outside. We all have to work together and work harder at having and promoting a positive outlook. Property owners think their properties are worth more than they are.

Fred Gillette, Chairman of the Public Safety Commission, being on the commission for 16 years, and also a member of the Special Commission on Law Enforcement Strategies, stated that there is a sense of 'not wellbeing' downtown. This is the largest patrol area in our state for resident troopers who do their best. This Thursday night they will start in earnest to prepare options for Council to look at. Ladies don't feel safe downtown, they feel a threatening atmosphere. A Town police force may cost \$5M for the first year to start the program. It's a complex issue. People need a sense of security before coming downtown.

Mike Gaudreau supports closing the walking bridge; he thinks half of the traffic would stop. People have been living under both ends of the bridge for most of the summer. Police on bikes have helped in the past.

Mark Tillinghast read the 21, 90-day actions from the Summary of the Downtown Workshop dated March 18, 2009. Discussion on incentives and private-public partnerships and what would assist property owners and renters to encourage business activities.

Bill Cheng favors shared support to start small businesses, there are many resources. No one has come to EDC and asked for loans, outside of downtown, but many businesses need funding sources.

Sean said downtown development is a multi-faceted problem with multi solutions. Personal safety is paramount to bringing families downtown. He suggested creating benchmarks as a way to keep on track with incremental steps and revisit every 3 months.

Jonathan Chapman can see the deep needs here. A longer term solution is to figure out where the homeless can go. The bigger problem is helping people. Churches are working on solutions regarding housing.

Jim Rivers thinks it is really about restaurants. Retail isn't coming back. We have to do something different. Have to have demand for something that you can't buy on the internet. When there's foot traffic, then the restaurants will come. There is a drug problem.

Many people in attendance are interested in the future of downtown and its vitality.

Meeting recessed at 6:35 PM. Meeting reconvened at 6:51 PM.

5. Unfinished Business Economic Development Trust Fund – The beginning balance of the Trust Fund as of September 1, 2015 was \$253,609.94. The interest for September was \$59.48. The balance as of September 30, 2015 was \$253,669.42.

a) Update of Projects:

- Handed out invitation for first Anniversary Celebration and ribbon cutting for Bodyworks Therapeutic Massage, October 15, 4:30 PM.

- Mill Mixed Use Development District text amendment to the regulations was approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission in September.
  - The NE CT Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting was well attended at their new location on Westcott Road.
  - October is manufacturing month and the Killingly Career Center at KHS will be taking a field trip to Web Industries on October 21.
  - QVCC is celebrating the groundbreaking for the new Advanced Manufacturing Center at the end of October.
  - Town Fair Tire opened last week. I am working with them on a ribbon cutting.
  - The state is revamping their tourism website, CTVisit. It will be ready for spring 2016 with direct links to regional tourism and businesses.
  - An application has been received for fixing of assessments from Craig Porter of National Redevelopment LLC at 535 Davis Rd. He is renovating the space for offices and warehouse space for his electrical contracting business. Craig will attend EDC in November for your review and recommendation.
  - Several Killingly businesses participated in the Taste of the Valley event: Black Pond Brews, Steampunk Cafe, Heirloom Foods, and Rene's Working Girl Catering.
8. Commission Member Reports – Mark Tillinghast mentioned that Riley's may be looking for space. Bill Cheng stated that the Open Space Commission may have a meeting in October.

**MOTION** by Steve Gilbert, **SECONDED** by Bill Cheng to omit Executive Session. Voice vote was **ALL IN FAVOR**.

9. Executive Session – Property Acquisition
10. Adjournment

A **MOTION** was made by Bill Cheng to adjourn at 7:10 PM. It was **SECONDED** by Steve Gilbert. The voice vote was **ALL IN FAVOR**.

Respectfully submitted,



Elsie Bisset  
Acting Recording Secretary