

**Town of East Windsor
Economic Development Commission**

11 Rye Street
Broad Brook, CT. 06016

**Regular Meeting
Tuesday, July 7, 2020**

Meeting held via ZOOM Teleconference
Meeting ID: 332 683 3563
Town Hall closed to the Public by
Executive Order of First Selectman Bowsza
due to Coronavirus pandemic

Meeting Minutes

**** These Minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting****

Economic Development Commission

Gil Hayes, Chairman
Bob Lyke, Jr., Vice Chairman
Bob Maynard
James Richards
Maria Rumore

Chairman Hayes called the July 7, 2020 Regular Meeting of the East Windsor Economic Development Commission to Order at 6:00 p.m. The Meeting is being held via teleconference due to closure of the Town Hall to the public as the result of the coronavirus epidemic.

Members Present: Gil Hayes (Chairman), Bob Lyke, Jr., Bob Maynard, Jim Richards, and Maria Rumore, Alternate.

Members Absent: All members were present.

Guests: First Selectman Bowsza hosted the meeting for the Commission. Also present were Ruben Flores-Marzan, Town Planner; and Marie DeSousa, Board of Selectman liaison to the Economic Development Commission.

ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM:

A quorum was established with all Regular and Alternate Members present.

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MOTION: To APPOINT Maria Rumore as a Regular Member for this meeting.

Richards moved/Hayes seconded/DISCUSSION: None.
VOTE: In Favor: Hayes/Lyke/Maynard/Richards
(No one opposed/No Abstentions.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Chairman Hayes asked if anyone signed into the meeting virtually would like to speak; no one responded.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/February 4, 2020:

**MOTION: To APPROVE the Minutes of the Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting dated February 4, 2020 as presented.**

Maynard moved/Richards seconded/DISCUSSION: None.
VOTE: In Favor: Hayes/Lyke/Maynard/Richards/Rumore
(No one opposed/No Abstentions.

GENERAL DISCUSSION/UPDATES:

A. EDC Website Update:

Commissioner Maynard reported he hasn't worked on the EDC webpage since February but when he tried to access the page he was working on he was unable to get into the page. He indicated he spoke with staff in the First Selectmen's office, who were unaware of the problem. Commissioner Maynard recalled that the Commission had been ok with his progress in February; someone needs to contact CivicPlus to remedy the situation. First Selectman Bowsza requested Commissioner Maynard e-mail regarding the problem.

B. Discussion of pending solar installations:

First Selectman Bowsza advised the Commission that there are multiple solar developments being considered in East Windsor.

The first project to come through is Gravel Pit I, II, and III, which includes land encompassing the Charbonneau pit, the Botticello properties, land off of Rye Street, and land owned by Markowski on Plantation Road. The project, proposed by North Light Energy and D. E. Shaw Renewable Investments, is a 120-megawatt grid scale development, which, when completed, will be the largest project in New England. They will also be the largest taxpayer, contributing just south of \$380,000 in tax revenue and

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\$1.5 million in capital improvements. At the end of the current stabilization agreement there is a 1% escalator for as long as they are there, plus an annual amount for capital improvements.

First Selectmen Bowsza reported there are other projects being considered as well. He noted a smaller project is being submitted to the CT Siting Council for property owned by the Catholic Cemeteries on 341 Middle Road which is being developed by Verogy. First Selectman Bowsza indicated Verogy recently made a presentation before the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Discussion followed regarding the approval process for these solar developments. Projects over a certain size are approved by the CT Siting Council, which supersedes local zoning requirements. Review by the CT Siting Council includes public hearings in which the Town and public parties can submit interrogatories. The process includes environmental assessments of the development location, and site walks. Typical project reviews through the CT Siting Council can take from 9 to 12 months.

Commissioner Maynard commended First Selectman Bowsza for the final negotiation agreement. First Selectman Bowsza indicated he has developed a team to discuss the potential of the various projects; members of the team include Town Planner Flores-Marzan, Town Engineer Norton, Operations Manager Sauerhoefer, and Town Assessor Totz. He suggested the team takes a circumstantial approach to considering each project, noting that the Middle Road project is proposed for property privately owned by the Catholic Cemeteries Association but is located across from a 22-home subdivision.

First Selectman Bowsza noted East Windsor was recently profiled in the Hartford Business Journal – one of the articles was the Gravel Pit Solar project. He also noted that the Silverman Group was recently approved for a 250,000 square foot distribution facility on the property previously approved for the Sardilli project. Approval of that project will make them the second largest taxpayer in town. First Selectman Bowsza indicated the Silverman Group was happy with their experience with the approval process; they're interested in investigating other properties in East Windsor.

Commissioner Lyke questioned what the ideal zoning is for land being considered for solar projects? First Selectman Bowsza indicated the developer would be looking for flat, clear land, which is often agriculturally zoned. He reiterated that the land for the Gravel Pit solar projects is ideal as most of the property involved isn't visible to the public. He cited the smaller project on Middle Road which is located across the road from a new subdivision, but noted these projects are private agreements between the landowners and the solar developer; the Town can't tell the landowner what to do. First Selectman Bowsza indicated that the Town can participate during the CT Siting Council review. The Town of Simsbury participated regarding the project located in their town. The process is long, expensive, and drawn out.

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Chairman Hayes questioned how long is the process of the interrogatories for interested parties? First Selectman Bowsza cited the interrogatories are done by parties that could be impacted by the projects. He indicated that East Windsor could participate but he didn't see the need to bring in environmental experts, or others. He suggested if the CT Siting Council does their public hearings in July the interrogatories might come up in the Fall.

Chairman Hayes commended First Selectman Bowsza for negotiating the tax stabilization agreement, and also thanked Commissioner Maynard as he felt some of the discussion occurred when he was in office. First Selectman Bowsza indicated it's good to have some wins.

C. General Discussion:

➤ **Change of membership:**

Chairman Hayes reported Alternate Commissioner Rumore would like to move up to a full-time member now, which is prior to the expiration of her term as an Alternate; he questioned the process necessary to move forward for Commissioner Rumore.

First Selectman Bowsza explained the process. Commissioner Rumore must begin by contacting the Town Clerk regarding her resignation from the Alternate position, and then submit the application for approval as a full-time member. First Selectman Bowsza indicated his office is working with the Town Clerk to clarify the steps of the procedure.

➤ **Local Business promotion/EDC budget:**

Commissioner Richards cited his experience as Executive Director of the East Windsor Chamber of Commerce indicates that local businesses are surviving the shutdowns due to the pandemic, but he questioned if the EDC could assist in some way? Commissioner Richards questioned the status of the EDC 2020 – 2021 budget; is any funding available to assist in the promotion of small businesses? First Selectman Bowsza briefly reviewed funding for the EDC, noting the budget is minimal – less than the previous year.

Chairman Hayes suggested the EDC website will be a vehicle to promote local businesses. Commissioner Richards felt the website shouldn't be the only spoke on the wheel; the Commission should be utilizing press releases as well.

Town Planner Flores-Marzan suggested First Selectman Bowsza did a great job updating the Commission on pending development projects. He is seeing developers

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moving from phone calls to project development. Town Planner Flores-Marzan noted First Selectman Bowsza has been instrumental in developing the Town newsletter – the Five Villages Voice; it's a great vehicle to promote initiatives for East Windsor.

First Selectman Bowsza suggested the first edition was an introduction to promoting the successes in Town. The next edition, which should be coming out in about a month, should include articles that tell of the great things happening in East Winsor, and encouraging people to move here or locate their business in town.

➤ **5 Year Plan:**

Commissioner Lyke suggested he's ready for photo assignments for the website and the newsletter.

With regard to the budget Commissioner Lyke reiterated the need for the Commission to develop a 5-year plan for business promotion and economic development. Chairman Hayes suggested members consider suggestions for the Commission's August meeting.

➤ **Economic Development Resources/Tax Abatements/Tax Increment Financing:**

• **Tax Abatements:**

First Selectman Bowsza advised the Commission another economic development tool the Town utilizes is a tax abatement on projects. He described the current schedule, noting that the shorter the duration of the abatement the quicker the taxpayers see the benefit of the abatement. First Selectman Bowsza cited the C.G.S. under which municipalities can offer abatements, and related that to our current ordinance – 16-1 – under which the abatements are offered. First Selectman Bowsza noted the C.G.S. has changed somewhat since Ordinance 16-1 was created; updating the ordinance is on his task list.

Commissioner Lyke cited that Amazon is an example of the distribution business expansion currently going on; he cited the recent approval of the Silverman Group's project on South Main Street. First Selectman Bowsza reported they intend to break ground in October, 2020. He suggested the Silverman Group is expanding their footprint in Connecticut. At present they don't have a specific tenant for the building, but the land was previously in an agricultural use at a much lower tax rate than the commercial use. First Selectman Bowsza noted this project will result in an approximate \$200,000 in Building Permit fees. Commissioner Lyke questioned the access to the property. First Selectman

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Bowsza noted they are using the same access as the Sardilli project, which was previously approved by OSTA. The Silverman Group project will have to be reviewed by OSTA again, but the impact for this project is less than the Sardilli project. Commissioner Lyke suggested perhaps some of the money captured in building fees could be used to mitigate some of the traffic issues on Route 5.

- **Tax Increment Financing (TIFs):**

First Selectman Bowsza updated the Commission on the concept of Tax Increment Financing. Under this concept the Town sets up regions within the community for redevelopment, the tax revenue generated within that area is then earmarked to be reinvested within that specific region. He cited the redevelopment of the Montgomery Mill in Windsor Locks as being an example of a TIF. He suggested the Town could do something similar if it decided to redevelop the Broad Brook Mill.

Commissioner Lyke suggested the Warehouse Point area would be a good candidate for a TIF; he cited the presentations being made by Terri Hahn. Town Planner Flores-Marzan reported Mrs. Hahn is nearly done with that study. She is considering the impact on stormwater within the Warehouse Point area and is currently discussing potential zoning districts to develop zoning regulations to promote infill development

- **Route 5 Corridor Study:**

Town Planner Flores-Marzan also noted the Route 5 Corridor Study is continuing, although progress was delayed due to COVID-19. CRCOG has been working on improvements to the Route 5 corridor, and studying the land use components within the area. First Selectman Bowsza also noted cameras have been installed at about 9 intersections from Exit 44 to the south, as the traffic study indicated that area to be the pinch point for traffic. The cameras control the signalization of the traffic lights and moves traffic along more smoothly. With COVID-19 impacting business and commuting along Route 5 it's difficult to tell how much the installation of the cameras helped.

- **Website development:**

Commissioner Rumore suggested she had mentioned previously that she had viewed the South Windsor Economic Development website and liked it. She questioned who would be maintaining East Windsor's webpage going forward? Could we beef up the information a bit? Commissioner Rumore suggested the

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South Windsor webpage had a lot of good information on it; she suggested we mirror that page. South Windsor's page includes a developer's guide as well. Commissioner Rumore indicated she had provided a link to the website location previously.

Commissioner Maynard indicated he had visited that link. It's a link to the Economic Development section of the South Windsor website, rather than a separate page.

- **Budget availability:**

Commissioner Richards reiterated his question of the current EDC budget; what's the money to be used for? He felt the Town should be doing something to promote the existing businesses more.

- **5-year plan:**

Commissioner Lyke suggested the Commission should discuss a 5-year plan at the August Meeting.

- **EDC Meeting schedule:**

Commissioner Rumore suggested the EDC should try to meet more frequently. Discussion followed regarding the reopening of Town Hall. First Selectman Bowsza indicated that had been anticipated as part of Phase 3 of the State's plan for reopening businesses. Reopening the Town Hall for meetings would limit meeting capacity to 25 inside, and 100 people outside. For the time being First Selectman Bowsza plans to continue ZOOM meetings; the public can participate by phone, tablet, or computer. Everyone needs to acknowledge the meeting ID number – 332 683 3563 – for those meetings hosted by First Selectman Bowsza. The meeting ID number is shown at the top of the ZOOM agenda. Chairman Hayes requested that First Selectman Bowsza record the meetings and post them to the YouTube site.

First Selectman Bowsza also noted renovations are planned for the Town Hall office locations; he would like to have the renovations – which he hopes to complete in a month or two – completed prior to reopening the Town Hall, including the meeting rooms, to the public. First Selectman Bowsza noted the Town Hall is still actively assisting people with business, just in different ways.

- **August EDC Meeting:**

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The Commission requested the recording secretary to schedule a meeting for the first Tuesday in August, (August 4, 2020).

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To ADJOURNED the Meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary, East Windsor Economic Development Commission.