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DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT

## TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD

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### East Hartford Economic Development Commission Special Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 13, 2023

East Hartford Community Cultural Center, Room 105

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rosario called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

#### Members Present:

Veronica Rosario, Chair  
Joelle Murchison, Vice Chair  
Salema Davis  
Shawna Rohan  
Angie Parkinson

#### Members Absent:

Jim Arsenault, Jr.  
Erwin Hurst  
Anita Morrison  
John Morrison

#### Guests Present:

Susan Favate, BFJ Planning  
Steve Hnatuk, Deputy Development Director  
Michael Daniels, Economic Development Coordinator

#### 2. DISCUSSION OF PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD) WITH TOWN'S PLANNING CONSULTANT, BFJ PLANNING

- A. Ms. Favate introduced herself and BFJ Planning. She and BFJ assisted the Town in creating the 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development.
- B. Ms. Favate gave a brief overview of the Plan of Conservation revision process and explained that the consultant team is currently meeting with the many boards and commissions in town to gain their perspectives.
- C. Ms. Favate asked about the EDC and its role. Chair Rosario explained that it is a place for people to share ideas and needs about East Hartford's business community and helps to create networking opportunities, especially for small and minority-owned businesses.

Ms. Favate asked what changes the commissioners have noticed since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Rohan said that as a real estate agent, she has seen greater willingness of people to live in East Hartford due to relative affordability. She said investors are interested in the town's multi-family housing stock. She said East Hartford homebuyers predominately have FHA or CHAFA mortgages.

Ms. Davis noted that East Hartford is more diverse than many parts of Connecticut and discussed the benefits of having rail service to New York City nearby in Hartford. Ms. Murchison said that the current Mayor and Town Council have brought a transformative attitude to the town, taking initiative to address lingering development issues such as Silver Lane Plaza. She noted that many small businesses have opened in recent years, many of them minority-owned businesses such as Perfect Poundcakes and The Russell. She said that the town's dated housing stock means that many homebuyers do not currently consider the town.

Ms. Favate asked how the commissioners would describe East Hartford's identity. Ms. Davis said she feels there is a small-town community atmosphere, especially compared to larger cities. Ms. Rohan noted that East Hartford maintains this feeling because it has not become overcrowded or seen as a destination like West Hartford, and many East Hartford residents have long-time connections to the town.

Ms. Rohan said she feels that East Hartford could use more desirable places to shop or eat. Ms. Parkinson said that the aim of developments such as the Concourse Park apartments or Port Eastside at Founders Plaza is to draw residents with more disposable income to the town, resulting in a demand for a wider variety of businesses.

The commissioners discussed businesses in town that serve as informal gathering or working spaces. They mentioned C3 Creative Collaborative Community and Rebel Dog Coffee Co. as recently opened businesses that are helping to serve this need, but they would like to see more, especially in the town's central business district.

Ms. Favate asked what physical infrastructure improvements the commissioners feel would be beneficial to the town. Ms. Parkinson suggested burying power lines, both for aesthetic and resiliency reasons. She also suggested smaller, more elegant traffic signals and elm trees as possible additions for Main Street.

Mr. Hnatuk said the town could explore more improvements and initiatives to slow traffic and improve walkability on Main Street following the recent road diet changes, which include alternate turn lanes and bike lanes. Ms. Murchison said she would like to encourage more foot traffic on Main Street, which would lead to more window shopping, as in Downtown Middletown. Ms. Rohan said she would like to see more permanent outdoor dining on Main Street. Ms. Parkinson highlighted the opportunity to take advantage of skyline views of Hartford as part of future restaurants or attractions at the Port Eastside development.

Ms. Favate asked about the town's arts community and thoughts about attracting early investors to the town. Commissioners mentioned the ongoing mural additions around the town. Ms. Rohan suggested exploring rainbow crosswalks, makers' markets, and street festivals. Ms. Parkinson suggested embracing East Hartford's multiculturalism and holding more events that represent the diverse backgrounds of East Hartford residents.

### **3. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Rosario adjourned the meeting at 5:23 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Daniels  
Economic Development Coordinator