ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY – REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2026, 8:30 A.M.
ZOOM MEETING PLATFORM (DRAFT)

Members Present: Bonnie Bercowetz, Chair; Siddiq Abdullah; Robert Firger; Vivian Nabeta (joined at 8:52am)
Members Absent: Tricia Martin

Also Present: Lynda Laureano, Assistant Director of Building and Land Use; Denise Robidoux, Justin Lafountain, David Driver of Goman + York on behalf of the Town of Bloomfield; and Rebecca Jones, Recording Secretary.

I. Call to Order

Chair Bercowetz called the meeting to order at 8:34am.

II. Approval of Minutes

a. March 10, 2026

Motion to approve the March 10, 2026 meeting minutes made by Commissioner Abdullah; seconded by Commissioner Firger. The motion was unanimously approved by a 3-0-0 vote.

III. Old Business

Ms. Laureano stated that staff continues to meet with the property owners at 31 Tobey Road. Continued enforcement is occurring in the Graby Road and Tobey Road area. The owners at 95 Tobey Road are working through code violations and are hoping to open an eat-in establishment within their retail space. Commissioner Abdullah asked about the community engagement meeting related to the proposed Aldi development. Town staff have not had any conversations with the developers and did not have any feedback related to the meeting.

IV. New Business

a. Discussion regarding possible EDC-DA quarterly in-person meetings

Chair Bercowetz proposed transitioning to hybrid meetings held in Town Hall's Wintonbury Conference Room, with the option for remote participation via Zoom. The group discussed plans for an upcoming tour of the Blue Hills Avenue area, which Chair Bercowetz suggested could be scheduled for 9:00 AM after traffic dies down. Ms. Laureano confirmed that both hybrid meetings and in-person tours would be feasible, and she will work on implementing the hybrid meeting format within the next couple of months.

V. Commission Member Updates

Commissioner Abdullah informed the Commission that Osaka ownership is changing hands for the fourth time. Commissioner Firger reported no progress on the Arts Commission's activities, noting challenges with funding for a bear project due to town budget restrictions. The group discussed potential alternative funding methods like a GoFundMe page or naming contest, though Commissioner Firger explained that unexpended budget from the current fiscal year

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cannot be used for next year's projects. He is hoping to pay for part of the project out of this year's budget and use money from next fiscal year to fund the remainder.

Chair Bercowetz reported on her work shadowing the Land Use and Code Enforcement Department, including meetings with Alex Samalot who handles zoning enforcement and introduced her to various planning department staff. She is planning to meet with Fire Marshal Jim Simone to understand his role and explore potential collaboration to help small startup businesses with compliance. She is also working on creating a flow chart to streamline the process for new businesses seeking zoning approval.

Commissioner Nabeta joined the meeting at 8:52am.

The Commission discussed challenges small business owners face when starting new ventures, particularly around commercial requirements and permits. Chair Bercowetz expressed willingness to provide hands-on support given her expertise in both business operations and regulatory requirements. Ms. Laureano proposed creating a short video, potentially animated, to guide potential business owners through the process of starting a business in Bloomfield, working with the communications office to develop this resource. She also proposed establishing an inquiry form or page to assist potential business owners, with Ms. Robidoux noting the importance of directing them to existing organizations like CBIA and the Chamber of Commerce while being mindful of costs. Chair Bercowetz emphasized the need for clear, simple information in plain English to support diverse business owners, while Commissioner Abdullah highlighted the convenience of online resources. Mr. Driver suggested organizing events at the Human Services Building to introduce city officials and representatives from business support organizations to potential entrepreneurs.

Chair Bercowetz discussed plans for a pollinator pathway project on Granby Street, extending from Toby Road to Cottage Grove Road, as a way to engage residents and build positive sentiment before potential redevelopment. She also proposed screening derelict buildings on the northwest corner of Tobey Road and Granby Road with a mural on a plywood fence, though Ms. Laureano noted this would require property owner consent as it involves private land. Chair Bercowetz suggested adding Burma Shave-style signs to generate excitement about Bloomfield.

VI. EDC Consultant Reports (Goman + York)

a. March 2026 Report

Mr. Lafountain shared that a new business is moving into the former Food Share building on Woodland Avenue. The business will manufacture custom wooden crates for shipping equipment, starting with approximately a dozen employees. Food Share has merged with Connecticut Food Pantry and relocated to Wallingford. Ms. Robidoux mentioned submitting congressional funding requests totaling over $16 million to support the Town Center project.

VII. Town Planner Report

a. POCD Update

The Town Plan and Zoning Commission will review the latest version of the POCD at their next meeting, with the possibility of holding another public hearing to receive feedback from residents.

b. Town Development Update

The commissioners received the Building and Land Use Update for March 2026 prior to this meeting and were encouraged to review it at their leisure. Ms. Laureano recommended that the Commission prepare a quarterly report for Town Council review.

c. Town Center Update

The Town is focusing on the TIF District as Ms. Robidoux previously discussed. Ms. Laureano shared information about Elevate Bloomfield, an initiative to support small businesses.

Development Agency

VIII. Continued discussion on Granby/Tobey TIF District

None.

IX. Public Comment

None.

X. Updates

None.

XI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Abdullah; seconded by Commissioner Nabeta and unanimously approved by a 4-0-0 vote. The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 am.