Economic Development Commission

Regular Meeting
July 15th, 2026 - 5:30 P.M.
Main Meeting Room, Simsbury Town Hall
933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, Connecticut 06070

MINUTES

Members Present: Charmaine Seavy, Chair; Matt Arthur, Vice-Chair (Virtual); Michael Scursso (Virtual); Gary Schless; Leland Holcomb (Virtual)

Others in Attendance: Marc Nelson, Town Manager (Ex-Officio); Mike Paine, Board of Selectmen Liaison; Ray Lagan, Granby-Simsbury Chamber of Commerce Executive Director/Chamber of Commerce Liaison; Dagny Griswold, Zoning Commission Liaison; Cyn Thomas, Business Development Coordinator/Tourism & Library Liaison; Erin Leavitt-Smith, Planning Commission Chair & Liaison

Chair Seavy called the meeting to order at 5:31 P.M. and the Commission said the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approve the February 25th, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes, March 18th, 2026 Minutes, and May 20th, 2026 Minutes

Commissioner Schless moved to approve the minutes as presented. Commissioner Holcomb seconded. The motions passed unanimously.

Liaison Updates & Reports

Town Manager –Manager Nelson announced the appointment of Cyn Thomas as the Town's new Part-Time Business Development Coordinator, effective date TBD. Her key responsibilities will include: Staff support for the Economic Development Commission (EDC); Reinvigorating tourism initiatives; Updating the Town's Economic Development website; Community outreach and stakeholder engagement; Strengthening collaboration among the EDC, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Partnership, and other community organizations.

The Town Manager also emphasized the need for a dedicated annual Economic Development budget, the importance of continued Board of Selectmen support, reviving previous economic development initiatives that had stalled.

Coordinator Thomas introduced herself and outlined her background in library science, graphic design, marketing, business development, and public engagement. Her priorities include listening to community stakeholders, improving coordination between organizations, reducing duplication of effort, and taking a proactive approach to economic development projects.

Chamber of Commerce - Director Lagan provided the Chamber update with upcoming events of Moe's Chicken & Waffle Grand Opening with an Open House scheduled for the July 16th from 5:00–7:00 p.m. Event includes free samples, music, and community networking. October's Spooktacular, scheduled for October 24th. Ticket prices reduced from $15 to $10 through Town grant funding. Event will feature live music, food trucks, children's activities, and community entertainment.

Chamber updates included a new Chamber member: Senior Helpers, providing in-home senior care services. Chamber leadership reported improved collaboration among local organizations and positive momentum heading into the new year.

Board of Selectmen - Selectman Paine reported that the Board has begun developing its annual goals and welcomed EDC input. He committed to improving communication between the BOS and EDC. Appointments to fill two vacant Democratic seats remain under consideration and are expected to move forward. Discussion included clarification regarding the EDC appointment ordinance - existing ordinance language allows qualified applicants even if they do not possess every preferred qualification.

Sustainability Committee – Manager Nelson provided the report on the progress of solar installations at Latimer Lane School and the High School, the continued planning for public EV charging stations, and the significant growth in the Sustainability Committee newsletter distribution. There is increased collaboration between the Sustainability Committee and the Town Manager's Office. Members discussed opportunities for future collaboration between Sustainability and the EDC, particularly regarding business outreach and energy efficiency incentives.

Library & Tourism - Coordinator Thomas shared the progress of the ongoing redesign of the Library's website, which is expected to launch in September and the continued "Meet the Merchant" promotion highlighting local businesses: June featured The Green Teahouse and July features sponsors of the Summer Reading Program. For Tourism, initial discussions are underway regarding revitalizing the Town's tourism efforts. A long-term tourism strategy and funding proposal will be developed before launching new initiatives.

Zoning Commission - Liaison Griswold shared several development projects, including:
Proposed redevelopment opportunities at the former movie theater property; Dorset Crossing commercial development; Proposed car wash project (currently under Planning review); Hartford South development status; McLean housing project approval.; New medical office/yoga facility at

507 Hopmeadow Street; Completion of the Cambridge Crossing workforce housing project under new ownership; New Chase Bank planned for the former fire-damaged property.

General discussion focused on balancing economic development, housing, infrastructure, and environmental considerations.

Planning Commission – Liaison Leavitt-Smith provided an update on the former movie theater property that remains vacant. A previously discussed proposal to convert the property to residential use has not advanced. At Dorset Crossing, plans for a proposed car wash recently came before the Planning Commission. The application resulted in a 2-2 vote and will proceed to the Zoning Commission. Discussion focused primarily on water usage, water recycling, and traffic impacts. The status of the Hartford South development was discussed, noting that wetlands permitting issues continue and that discussions regarding a smaller development proposal remain ongoing. The Cambridge Crossing workforce housing project is moving forward under new ownership. The project will include affordable homeownership units.

Main Street Partnership (MSP) – Commissioner Schless reported on the Office Vacancy Committee. Current initiatives include: Identifying underutilized office buildings suitable for redevelopment; Evaluating housing conversion opportunities; Considering tax abatements and development incentives; Developing marketing materials highlighting available infrastructure such as sewer, gas, and fiber connectivity; Touring several vacant commercial properties to assess redevelopment potential.

MSP Executive Director Nielsen submitted her report electronically:
SMSP helped new owner of 507 Hopmeadow get a text amendment to open CT Aerial Yoga. Thanks to Town Planner for assisting us with this as well. Ribbon cutting will be August 24th at 5pm; SMSP worked with First Selectman and Town Manager to move The Children's Museum to Simsbury; SMSP was on planning committee for 250th Celebration Parade this past Saturday with John Fox and Kevin Kowalski; Office Space Vacancy Committee has toured several of the chosen sites and is working on identifying funding, abatements, infrastructure and marketing for chosen sites. Impending revaluation within next 2 years and the deeply discounted price of office buildings makes this a high importance project; The 16th Annual A Taste in Simsbury Presented by Liberty Bank will be held on Thursday, August 27th at The Riverview.

Chair Report

Chair Seavy shared plans to improve outreach to local businesses and reviewed the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and identifying projects where the EDC can assist. Upcoming Commission vacancies, including the Chair position, with terms expiring in October should be considered as soon as possible. Ongoing improvements to the Economic Development Commission section of the Town website, with additional updates planned under the new Business Development Coordinator.

New Website "Businesses" Button Discussion

Discussion centered on improving the Town's Business and Economic Development Commissions' web presence. Suggestions included: more modern design and photography, clear business resource information, step-by-step development guides, improved navigation for prospective businesses and developers. Manager Nelson indicated these improvements will become a priority as the new coordinator transitions into the role.

Municipal Economic Development Comparative Analysis: *Town of Branford*

The Commission finalized their review of the Town of Branford's EDC website and discussed potential action items and economic development/business resources.

Farmington Valley Health District Business Resources

The Commission discussed the Farmington Valley Health District's business resource materials. Members noted the value of incorporating or linking to these resources as part of the Town's online business information to better assist prospective and existing businesses. Liaison Lagan reported that he had recently met with Farmington Valley Health District staff regarding final inspections for the new Chipotle restaurant. He noted that final approvals were expected soon, with the restaurant anticipated to open in the near future.

Adjourn
Chair Seavy adjourned the meeting without objection at 6:43 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cyn Thomas
Business Development Coordinator