Economic Development Commission

Regular Meeting
October 21, 2026 – 5:30 P.M.
Main Meeting Room, Simsbury Town Hall
933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, Connecticut 06070

MINUTES

Members Present: Michael Zemel, Chair; Jeremy Pearlman, Vice-Chair; Matt Arthur; Leland Holcomb; Gary Schless; Michael Scursso

Others in Attendance: Mike Paine, Selectman/Board of Selectmen Liaison; Jami Lewchik, Sustainability Committee Chair; Bayard Faithfull, Sustainability Committee Vice Chair & Liaison; Dagny Griswold, Zoning Commission Liaison (Virtual); Cyn Thomas, Business Development Coordinator/Tourism & Library Liaison

Chair Zemel called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. and the Commission said the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approve the September 30, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Schless moved to approve the minutes as presented. Vice-Chair Pearlman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Report

Chair Zemel highlighted the current ordinance (Chapter 9) and its potential limitations for EDC initiatives. The upcoming charter revision vote was discussed, with the expectation that if passed, the Board of Selectmen will have six months to develop an ordinance for the EDC, potentially allowing for agency budgets and other resources. The 2026 annual report will be used to clarify and request a specific ordinance and budget based on impactful initiatives. Workshops are intended to facilitate free-form brainstorming, followed by grouping and ranking of ideas based on impact and ordinance requirements.

Agenda Packet documents and related documents discussed were 2025 Tri-Board Letter; POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development); Charette Report (2010/2011) & Form-Based Code; Parcel Inventory; Building Permits; Advanced CT Simsbury data; Grand List; and Site Plans.

A list of key town departments and organizations for collaboration was presented (Finance, Zoning, Design Review Board, Wetlands, Assessor, DPW, Parks & Rec, Library, Tourism).

Vice-Chair Pearlman moved to amend the agenda swapping the order of ***mySimsbury*** **Presentation** before **Workshop Discussion** as presented. Commissioner Schless seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

mySimsbury **Presentation**

Chair Zemel presented the app, *mySimsbury*, to the members. Key points included:

1. Origin: Developed over the summer by the presenter in response to community questions about the Memorial Fountain and a desire to create a shared points network for Simsbury businesses.
2. Core Concept: A digital platform designed to be the "digital fabric" of the town, offering various features.
3. Data Privacy: Emphasized as a priority, utilizing single sign-in through Google, Apple, or Facebook. *mySimsbury* does not record personal identifiable information beyond a unique user ID and nickname.
4. Calendar App: Unified view of local events from various organizations (library, schools, Chamber of Commerce, etc.). Users can subscribe to calendars and add events to their personal calendars.
5. Games (Journal & Quests):
    a. Journal: Features historical figures that can be "met" virtually within the town.
    b. Quests: Location-based challenges that users can complete by visiting specific sites, with the ability to integrate local art.
    c. Badges: Awarded upon completion of games and quests.
    d. Capture the Flag: A team-based game utilizing town locations.
6. Public Records Search: Full-text search capability across minutes, agendas, land use applications, and more, with links to detailed information about boards and commissions.
7. Trails App: Access to trail maps from local organizations (Land Trust, McLean, Trap Rock Ridge).
8. Contacts App: A directory of town contacts.
9. Widgets: Weather alerts and upcoming events.
10. Hike Builder: Tool to create custom hikes based on user parameters.
11. Rewards Program:
    a. Resident View: Users can favorite businesses, request points based on purchases (e.g., $50 purchase generates a QR code for points), and claim rewards.
    b. Merchant View: Merchants can set up their profiles, point issuance controls (points per dollar, transaction limits), add employees, manage their account via an escrow model with automatic top-ups, and view analytics.
    c. Financial Model: An escrow system where merchants top up accounts, points issued move funds from available to reserve balances, and a 10% fee supports

infrastructure, administration, the White Memorial Fountain, and distributed minigame points. This is a closed-loop, non-profit system.

d. Revenue Projections: Modest revenue potential ($10-15k/year) for *mySimsbury*, with server costs and administrative hours factored in.
e. Fountain Funding: A portion of the revenue is earmarked for the White Memorial Fountain.
f. Inter-town Potential: The possibility of other towns participating for a fee.

12. Homes and Businesses App (Under Development): A tool to search for homes and learn about villages, with a potential business panel for prospective businesses.
13. Four Core Principles: Free for users, minimal data collection, no ads, and fair treatment of all businesses.
14. Timeline: Proposed launch for Summer of the following year, preceded by a 3-month pilot program.
15. Disclosure: The presenter disclosed their role as Chair of the EDC and developer of the app to the Board of Ethics, abstaining from voting on this item.
16. Lifespan Expectation: Estimated 3-year lifespan for regional shared loyalty programs, with potential for extensions through new content and seasonality.

Vice-Chair Pearlman moved to recommend presenting *mySimsbury* app for a pilot program to the Board of Selectmen. Commissioner Scurrso seconded. The motion passed with 4-1-0. Chair Zemel recused himself from the vote.

Commissioner Arthur moved for a short recess. Commissioner Scursso seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Vice-Chair Pearlman moved to amend the previous motion to recommend *mySimsbury* to the Town, rather than directly to the Board of Selectmen. Commissioner Arthur seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Zemel recused himself from the vote.

Workshop Discussion

Chair Zemel led the workshop discussion with the goal to brainstorm and prioritize EDC initiatives. Commissioners were asked to write down 2-3 ideas, then ideas were categorized loosely into pillars such as attracting new businesses, retaining existing businesses, and helping businesses expand. Commissioners selected preferred ideas to narrow the focus and individuals took on specific initiatives for further development.

Adopt 2026-2027 Work Plan

Vice-Chair Pearlman moved to table the adoption of the 2026-2027 Work Plan. Commissioner Holcomb seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Liaison Updates & Reports

Chamber of Commerce – No liaison report.

Board of Selectmen - Selectman Paine discussed business outreach and emphasized the importance of retaining existing customers and businesses. He advised the EDC to discuss and develop a process for commenting on projects before they come before the town, citing the recent car wash proposal denial as an example of discussions happening too late. Selectman Paine mentioned the complexities of tax incentives, suggesting freezing taxes for a period rather than lowering current taxes to avoid subsidizing by other taxpayers. He raised concerns about whether tax discounts to property owners translate to rent reductions for tenants, in addition to the potential impact of commercial vacancies on the residential tax base following the next revaluation.

Town Manager – No liaison report.

Sustainability Committee – Sustainability Committee Vice Chair & Liaison Faithful discussed the successful initiative of home energy assessments with a goal of 100 assessments surpassed in 3 months. An upcoming initiative (starting November 1st) of free energy assessments for businesses through Efficient Lighting and Maintenance and Energize CT funds. A January Business Roundtable event with Green Bank (C-Case) to present financing opportunities for energy efficiency upgrades to local businesses. The EDC was asked to support this initiative through communication and outreach.

Commissioner Scursso moved to support the Sustainability Committee's business roundtable initiative. Commissioner Schless seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Library & Tourism – No liaison report

Zoning Commission – Liaison Griswold reported that the car wash proposal was denied by a 3-3 vote. The applicants intend to pursue it further. Concerns were raised by some voters regarding environmental stewardship, while others felt the risk of contamination was minimal given the project's design and connection to the public sewer.

Planning Commission – No liaison report.

Main Street Partnership (MSP) – No liaison report.

Review 2026 EDC Annual Report for submission to the Board of Selectmen

The Commission discussed the 2026 annual report content to include workshop initiatives and will be used to clarify and request a specific ordinance and budget based on those impactful initiatives.

Adjourn

Vice-Chair Pearlman moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Arthur seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cyn Thomas
Business Development Coordinator