



Town of Wallingford
Economic Development Commission
45 South Main Street, Room 311
Wallingford, CT 06492

Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2026

Present:

Frank Apuzzo, Vice Chair
John Bau, Alternate
Anthony Bracale, Chair
Carl Casper, Commissioner
Rob Fritz, Commissioner
Gary Gonzalez, Commissioner
Nick Lombardi, Commissioner
Austin McAnneny, Commissioner

Absent

Susan Gomes, Alternate
Amy Souchuns, Alternate

Others Present:

Joe Mirra, Resident, Simpson Court Improvement Projects
Tim Ryan, Resident, Simpson Court Improvement Projects
Dale Kroop, REX Development
Don Crouch, Economic Development Specialist
Stacie McCarthy, EDC Secretary
Jessica Wysocki, Resident

- 1. Call to Order:** Chair Bracale called the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 6:30PM.
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance** – Chair Bracale led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 3. Consent Agenda:** Note: All items listed under 'Consent' will be enacted by one motion. Commissioners can request to remove an item from consent. (One Motion covers all items)
 - Adopt Meeting Minutes dated September 14, 2026
 - Adopt Monthly Expenditure Reports – September 2026

Commissioner Casper made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Vice Chair Apuzzo seconded the motion. Consent Agenda was unanimously approved.

- 4. Items removed from Consent:** None

5. Guest Presentations:

a. Joe Mirra & Tim Ryan: Simpson Court Mural Update

Mr. Mirra and Mr. Ryan provided an update on ongoing efforts to incorporate additional public art into downtown Wallingford, including 'Mark Gingras Mural Project' at 50 North Main Street, next to Half Moon Café. They explained that Mark had a passion for Wallingford and was always looking for opportunities for enhancement. After his passing, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Mirra and others

worked alongside Mark's family and the 'Mark Gingras Liberty Bank Community Fund' which was created to honor him as the former Liberty Bank Board Chairman and Wallingford resident and Wallingford Arts and Cultural Alliance (WACA), to continue honoring his memory through community leadership and philanthropic spirit. Mr. Mirra and Mr. Ryan noted that a Ribbon Cutting was held May 2026 for the 'Mark Gingras Mural Project' which was created by the accomplished muralist Ryan Christenson, better known as ARCY, who is a proud Sheehan High School graduate. They explained artwork for a second alley is being considered, with completion anticipated in the spring. Mr. Mirra and Mr. Ryan noted there may be other projects in the future.

The group further discussed the importance of maintaining and promoting a vibrant, walkable downtown. Mr. Ryan emphasized downtown's competitive advantage and encouraged EDC to continue supporting beautification efforts and identifying opportunities to enhance the area, including the historic train station.

Chairman Bracale discussed the EDC's previous RFP for the train station, which was unsuccessful. The Commission discussed lessons learned from the prior process and the importance of establishing a clear vision for the property before issuing another RFP. Members expressed interest in involving Town Council representatives and other stakeholders earlier in the process

Additionally, Mr. Mirra discussed the potential benefits of outdoor dining to the downtown experience. He noted that it creates destination appeal by attracting visitors and regional tourists, driving retail foot traffic, fostering a strong sense of community and excitement, and creating social hubs where people can celebrate milestones, hold meetings, and build neighborhood camaraderie.

Mr. Crouch recognized Mr. Mirra, Mr. Ryan and others for their ongoing commitment and continued efforts to improve downtown and noted Wallingford's improved standing with Connecticut Main Street as a result of all of the enhancements that have been made.

b. Dale Kroop, REX Development: 'On the Ground – Roles and Responsibilities of the Town's "economic development team" & strategic planning for development'

Dale Kroop of REX Development introduced himself and provided an overview of economic development activities and resources. He discussed business retention and expansion, business attraction, sector-based economic development, marketing and storytelling, signage, grant opportunities, and business visitation as important components of an EDC's work.

Mr. Kroop emphasized the importance of understanding the needs of both large and small businesses through regular business visits. He also discussed the emerging concept of "greyfields," referring to properties such as former schools, bowling alleys, gyms, and strip malls that have outlived their original use. State funding may be available for feasibility studies, cost-benefit analyses, and redevelopment of these properties. The train station could potentially be identified as a greyfield project.

Mr. Kroop also discussed opportunities to connect manufacturers, healthcare organizations, workforce partners, and the EDC to address workforce needs. Housing availability and affordability were identified as important factors in attracting and retaining employees and businesses.

Mr. Kroop described workforce initiatives designed to expose students and parents to career opportunities in the trades, manufacturing, STEM, construction, automotive fields, and other technical careers. He suggested that EDC could consider workshops bringing manufacturers and parents together to discuss career opportunities, salaries, and available pathways.

The discussion also included opportunities to support entrepreneurs and small businesses through educational workshops covering the fundamentals of starting and operating a business. Mr. Kroop noted that he could assist EDC with developing programming and connecting appropriate speakers or panelists.

Additionally, the Commission discussed how it can more effectively support Economic Development staff and the Administration. Commissioners agreed that the EDC would benefit from a workshop and development of a work plan identifying priorities and measurable goals. Mr. Kroop suggested that a workshop could focus on a specific project, such as the train station, as a way to establish a collaborative working model. Commissioners also discussed clarifying the EDC's role, improving communication with Town officials, breaking down silos, and ensuring the Commission adds value to the work of staff. Mr. Kroop's presentation attached below.

Reports:

a. Committee Reports:

Retention and Marketing Committee

No update.

Planning and Zoning Committee

Commissioner Casper reported the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) was adopted and received approximately 1,300 responses during the public input process. Housing, schools, trails, and a vibrant downtown were identified as important community priorities. Commissioners discussed the importance of implementing POCD action items and communicating accomplishments through storytelling.

Housing/Workforce Development/Education Committee

Commissioner Bau provided an update explaining that a group of key stakeholders worked together to coordinate a 'Manufacturing Day', for students at Ulbrich Boys & Girls Club. Middle and High School students visited Hobson & Motzer on October 2, 2026, to learn about manufacturing career opportunities. Commissioner Bau noted that the event was well attended and very well received with Mayor Cervoni, other ED Commissioners attending as well as Quinnipiac University students who attended as mentors to the Boys & Girls students. He explained that the event established a foundation for future visits with other manufacturers.

Commissioner Bau also noted that the 'Manufacturing, Engineering & Technology' Career Fair is scheduled for March 2027. He noted he has hosted the event in past years, and it has always proved successful in connecting participants with top employers while exploring career opportunities and ultimately helping to shape the future of the workforce. The Commission agreed these types of events are valuable and will continue to engage students to share the possibilities of exploring a career outside of a traditional four-year college path.

b. Economic Development Specialist / Staff Report

Mr. Crouch provided the following updates:

- Met with Patchwork Players Theatre
- Met with a developer regarding battery storage facility
- Attended Economic Development Partnership Summit with CMSC, AdvanceCT, CMDA, and CEDAS

- Met with business owner regarding a potential new restaurant
- Met with CT DOT regarding TOD plans for the North Colony parking lot site.
- Attended 2nd Annual Leadership and Policy Summit – NYSEDC which brought together hundreds of economic development professionals from New York and the tri-state area.
- Working with REX Development regarding a grant opportunity for redesign of John St Bridge.
- Collaborated with Administration, Staff and Chairman Bracale to initiate the inaugural Mayor's Business Leadership Forum: Manufacturing Edition which brought together and hosted many of the top manufacturing Business Leaders in Wallingford.
- Participating in interviews for Grant Coordinator position.

Chairman Report

Chairman Bracale reported that the Manufacturer Roundtable/Mayor's Business Leadership Forum; Manufacturing Edition was in September and was successful in generating and engaging discussion among some of the top manufacturing Business Leaders in Wallingford. Chairman Bracale met with Mayor Cervoni and ED Staff as a follow-up debrief and the group discussed establishing ongoing advancement of this initiative including creating cluster-focused meetings with different segments of business such as Human Resources, Workforce Development, etc. Chairman Bracale also suggested future meetings may be held off-site at local manufacturers, including Ulbrich and Hobson & Motzer.

6. Old Business:

Review of Current Incentives and Next Steps

The Commission discussed the current economic development incentives and the need to review and renew existing programs. Commissioners discussed the challenges associated with incentive housing zones and whether similar programs in other communities have been effective. Mr. Crouch noted he could provide examples of other towns' plans. Commissioners discussed keeping incentive programs simple and recognizing that individual projects may require customized approaches rather than a one-size-fits-all model. It was also noted that taxes are only one component of a broader incentive package that may include utilities and other factors. Mr. Crouch and Commissioners Bracale, Lombardi and McAnnenny will continue reviewing this topic and provide more information at a later date.

7. New Business:

None.

There being no further business, Commissioner Apuzzo made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30PM.; Commissioner Bau seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Sincerely,
Stacie McCarthy
Stacie McCarthy, Secretary

On The Ground

- Roles and responsibilities of the Town's "economic development team" & strategic planning for development
- *Wallingford Economic Development Commission*
10/5/26

What is Economic Development?

- “Economic development is the intentional practice of improving a community’s economic well-being and quality of life. It includes a broad-range of activities to attract, create, and retain jobs, and to foster a resilient, pro-growth tax base and an inclusive economy. The practice of economic development comprises of a collaborative effort involving industry, government and myriad community stakeholders”. (IEDC)
- or
- “Economic Development is the process of improving the standard of living of a community (City) by creating jobs and attracting investment”

Who is on the Team?

- Elected officials/municipal offices
- Boards and commissions (P&Z, Conservation, etc.)
- Business community and citizens
- Schools and universities
- Chambers, nonprofits and regional ED organizations
- Advocates: housing, transportation, preservationists, environmentalists
- Product/service providers: developers and real estate community, site selectors/consultants
- Government: state and federal

Economic Development Glossary of Terms

Business Retention
and Expansion

Business Attraction

Business Recruitment

Business Creation

Business
Clusters/Sectors

Responsibilities of Economic Development Commission and Staff

- Adopt strategic plan of economic development
- Promote economic development in town and contribute to plan of conservation & development
- Identify areas of town for development
- Make recommendations to voting boards in town
- Help initiate an application to change a zoning district, propose an economic development zone, present proposed regulations
- Appear before other land use commissions meeting and present position
- Review all other commissions agendas and minutes to keep abreast of developments and timelines
- Economic Development Strategy: Based on market realities

Components of a Successful Economic Development Program

- Marketing (eNews), Social Media, “Telling the Story”
- Site Selectors/Real Estate strategy
- Utility contacts
- Intergovernmental relations: Know your delegation!
- Financing Solutions: Grants and private investment
- Incentives for businesses and/or developers
- Business Visitation Program
- Heritage Tourism
- Workforce Strategy that includes Businesses, Colleges and the High School.
- Shovel Ready Sites

Goal: Business Retention and Expansion

#1 Priority: 80% of Activity:
What and Why is this Important?

- Keep Mill Rate Steady
- Educate Citizens
- Incentives That Reward, Not Punish
- Redevelopment Strategy/Plans
- Infrastructure
- Key Industry Knowledge
- How Can You Help?
- Create Destinations and Focus on Place Making
- Develop Cluster/Sector Strategy
- Create Value: Develop Resources for Workforce, Transportation, Energy, etc
- Educate Businesses: Training and Business Assistance Services

Goals: Business Attraction

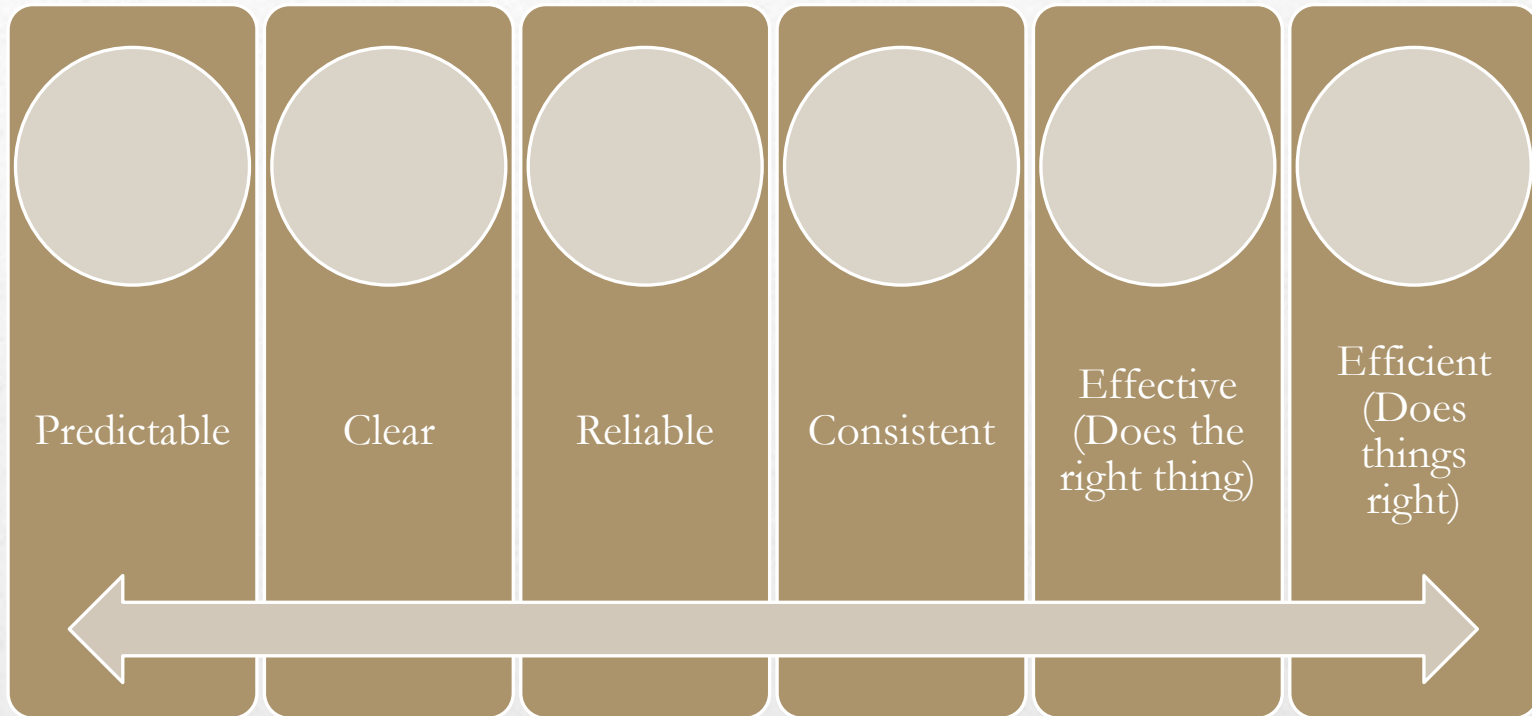
What and *Why* is the Important?

- Housing Opportunities and Costs
- Available Demographics
- Timely Permitting
- Quality Infrastructure: Water, Sewer, IT
- Educated and Skilled Workforce
- Location of Sites
- Incentives That Reward, Not Punish
- Marketing, Web Site, etc
- Location of Institutions
- Educate Home Customers

Business Creation

- Entrepreneurship Training
- Business Incubator
- Accelerators (With Investors)
- Co-Work Space
- Maker Space: Industry 4.0;
i.e. Technology Transfer, 3-D Printing

Local Regulatory Process Needs to Be....



One of the best business incentives is a streamlined regulatory process.