



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, June 16, 2026 – 7:30 AM –
84 South Main Street, Cheshire, CT 06410

PRESENT: Derek Gromko (Chair), David Pelletier (Vice-Chair), Don Dobbs (Secretary), Dave Borowy, Michael Ceccorulli, Mark Thomas

ABSENT: Courtney Cullinen, Yetta Augur (President of Chamber of Commerce), Mandy Miller

STAFF: Andrew Martelli (Assistant Town Manager)

GUEST: Bill Cunningham, Kelly's Farm

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gromko called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

B. ROLL CALL / DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

The roll was called, and a quorum was present.

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by everyone in attendance.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 19, 2026

- Mr. Pelletier made a motion to approve the minutes.
- Mr. Ceccorulli made a second motion to approve the minutes.
- All approved the meeting minutes.

E. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS: None

F. COMMISSION BUSINESS:

1. Kelly's Farm Discussion: Special guest Bill Cunningham

Mr. Cunningham, a lifelong resident of Cheshire and successful businessman is enthusiastic about the preservation of the historic Norton Brothers Fruit Farm which is now being restored as Kelly's Farm. - Kelly's Farm

Some history:

Mr. Cunningham shared that the zone text amendment approval came 1 year after he first made

outreach on the purchase of the Norton Farm property which started many, many discussions. He felt building houses on the property was a bad idea and there was a need to preserve this property. He began a partnership with Dr. Epstein, but it became hard to continue, and Mr. Cunningham chose to proceed with this project alone.

Mr. Cunningham and Tim Norton have arrived at an agreement for Tim Norton to farm the land. New tractors were purchased and a plan has been outlined to continue fruit farming.

The new name: **Kelly's Farm** is after Bill daughter Kelly who passed away in 2005. She loved visiting apple orchards, and it seemed most fitting to name the farm after her.

Plan for the Farm.

The retail store needs approximately \$700k in upgrades to make it operational again.

The house is uninhabitable. Mr. Cunningham estimates it will need about \$1 million in upgrades to make it livable. Mr. Cunningham plans to use the house for wedding guests, rehearsal dinners, wedding breakfasts, etc. This will go well with the barn he is planning to build as a venue for weddings as well as other special events.

He also plans to partner with Cheshire caterers to support these events.

Mr. Martelli shared that the Planning and Zoning Commission approved the zone text amendment for the property on 6/15 with only a few concerns from the public. This will initially allow outdoor events on the property and once the barn is built, indoor events. Starting all this work will depend on permits, but once those are approved, work can begin.

Mr. Martelli outlined next steps, like submitting new permits and working with the Town Council on what the town will purchase based on the permits and approvals from Inland Wetlands and Planning and Zoning. Mr. Martelli also noted there will be a paved parking lot.

Mr. Ceccorulli asked Mr. Cunningham about the economics of operating a fruit farm. Mr. Cunningham explained it is not easy and depends on several factors such as debt. He also noted other farms in CT operate venues as part of their business plan. Ex. Lyman Orchards in Middlefield, CT.

Mr. Martelli outlined a rough timeline for opening the new farm:

- House and store targeting a soft opening Spring of 2027
- Barn venue targeting opening Fall of 2027.

Mr. Gromko invited Mr. Cunningham to return in one year to provide an update on the progress of the new farm.

Mr. Cunningham also invited commission members to visit and tour the property.

G. EDC Update:

The July Economic Development Commission regular meeting is cancelled.

The August Economic Development Commission regular meeting will be moved to Tuesday August 4 at 7:30 AM to prepare presentation on the EDC Goals and Objectives and Main Street TIFF Proposal for the Town Council.

This topic will be added to the Town Council meeting agenda on August 11, 2026.

Mr. Dobbs asked if Mr. Cunningham has asked about any tax abatement opportunities. Mr. Martelli answered not at this time.

Mr. Thomas asked if Kelly's Farm will be taxed as a normal business. Mr. Martelli said he had to look at it to make that determination.

Mr. Ceccorulli asked if other farms will follow this approach.

Mr. Martelli noted that its possible.

Ex. Town of Seymour had a farm that had a conservation easement agreement with allowed the owners to continue to farm.

Ex. Gouveia Vineyards in Wallingford, CT is another example.

Other EDC updates:

- Arby's site – there are plans to split the building into two parts: one for a fast feed operation and the other as a coffee shop.
- ATT wireless will be opening at Stonebridge Commons
- Hotel build is starting with target to open June 2027.
- No updates on plans for the Macy's building
- Viron Rondo is starting the outdoor patio build.
- One proposal has been received for the RFP on the property at the corner of Jarvis Rd and Route 10.
- The Mountain Rd permits a 12-unit apartment complex; discussions continue for this property.
 - Mr. Martelli said this permit has been in progress for a long time.
 - Mr. Ceccorulli added that the application is quite technical due to fire code interpretations, but discussions continue.
 - Mr. Pelletier voiced concerns about rental prices being high and not very affordable.

H. ADJOURNMENT

- Ms. Pelletier made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
- Mr. Ceccorulli made a second motion.
- All were in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 8:32 a.m.

Attest: Celine L'Heureux (mo)
Celine L'Heureux, Minutes Clerk