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Peter Squitieri, Vice Chair  
John DiCenzo  
Alison Smith  
Marty Avallone  
Donna Peterson  
Tom Shimko



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Wilton Economic Development Commission

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## Discussion – 2024 Focus Areas and Opportunities

### **Avallone, Martin**

#### Reply all

Thu 1/11, 10:17 AM

DiCenzo, John;  
Joseph Favarolo;  
Smith, Alison;  
Peterson, Donna;  
Squitieri, Peter;  
[shimkot2@gmail.com](mailto:shimkot2@gmail.com)

Joe,

Per your request, in connection with our future efforts beyond what Toni/BoS may ask us to focus on, I would recommend that the EDC:

A- Expand business spotlight program beyond video to ask WHS students to send local business photos and short segments for Alison to post on the WEDC social media pages (eg., winter carnival, sales, other events - current or future) Content is always important to build our following and continue promoting.

B- Survey local businesses to 1) share that we are proposing recommendations on signage to P&Z; 2) to gauge their satisfaction with Wilton and the town services; and 3) identify areas of training that they would like or areas of improvement.

C- Coordinate with Wilton Library and Wilton Chamber of Commerce to host business programs in response to A3 above and to address other business constituencies (hybrid workers, new business prospects) perhaps in conjunction with SCORE.

Thanks.

Marty Avallone  
Wilton EDC

## **Shimko, Tom**

### Reply all

Thu 1/11, 3:00 PM

EconomicDevelopmentCommission;  
Shimko, Tom

Thank you again for the warm welcome yesterday! It was a pleasure to meet the team and an honor to join your committee!

Below are my thoughts and ideas on the key constituents to focus on as part of the 2024 mission and ultimately the action plan.

Building the 2024 Mission statement can begin with how we define our primary "customers" and constituents - where to focus. As I briefly mentioned, there are three EDC key constituencies that were identified for me prior to my appointment. We touched on each of these during my interview and I briefly mentioned them last night.

These three include Current Local Businesses, Virtual or Semi-Virtual Work From Home Wilton Residents, and New Businesses. Others may also exist and be more highly prioritized (I'm too new to know!!!)

Some detail and initial thoughts on each of these are as follows:

#### **1. Current Local Businesses: Possible scope and mission to focus EDC efforts on ways to retain and grow local businesses, increase referrals and endorsements, and to identify ways to help them to grow.**

Efforts may include improving our understanding of current business needs, their expectations from the town, overall satisfaction, prioritizing any areas of concern, or friction in supporting their growth, identifying opportunities to provide commercial support, etc., and delivering insights, and recommended prioritized actions leading to improvements.

Examples of actions are to survey businesses to define their primary 2024 needs and wants, identifying any areas of dissatisfaction, prioritizing areas of opportunity, and to share results as part of establishing potential actions.

Overall Satisfaction and Net Promoter Scores can serve as a baseline measure on whether local businesses would recommend Wilton as a good business location, identify unmet needs, and areas to focus on for potential actions and improvements.

## **2. Virtual/Semi-Virtual Work Wilton Residents:**

Primarily focusing on Wilton residents that work from home always or often.

This may include providing and improving communications on the benefits available to virtual work from home Wilton residents. For example, local availability of temporary meeting room space and short-term office space, walking trails for leisure breaks during the day, access to shipping, mailing services, and financial services, and specific opportunities to network and meet other telecommuting residents and neighbors.

In addition, arts, leisure, local amenities, and other social advantages were mentioned as an additional draw that could be communicated as reasons to live and work from Wilton. Also enhancing amenities and "draw" by targeting and supporting related new business expansions.

Efforts may include improving our understanding of the needs and wants of "work from home" (WFH) residents and defining additional support opportunities, concurrently enhancing communications for WFH networking events and/or new opportunities to meet others doing the same. Also, identifying gaps and working with local institutions (e.g. Library, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) to fill them. The ultimate goal may be to make Wilton the "work from home dream town."

## **3. New Business Development: Raising awareness of the Wilton value proposition and its' competitive business advantages to new business start-ups, and expanding businesses.**

Potential areas of focus include bringing education and seminars targeted to new and growing businesses to Wilton, along with entrepreneurs looking to start a new business. Also, highlighting the added value of the local support infrastructure and showcasing examples of success stories of Wilton based businesses. Likely also packaging the overall Wilton "pitch".

Efforts may include partnering with new business support and education organizations (e.g. SCORE, others) to bring their meetings and seminars to Wilton, defining our local business potential with clear local demographics, and packaging examples of support, and highlighting any economic, tax or other "business-forward" Wilton advantages. Also, leveraging the great work completed on "Spotlighting" local businesses, to showcase successful Wilton businesses to those considering establishing a presence in the town.

Again, these are ideas for discussion and please take them as some thoughts from the "new guy".

I'm looking forward to working together!

Tom

**DiCenzo, John**

Reply all

Wed 1/17, 10:44 AM

EconomicDevelopmentCommission

Hi All,

Tom and Marty have done a great job here and covered my thoughts. The only other thing I remember was that we discussed whether we want to participate in public events in town.

Best,

jd

## **Shimko, Tom**

### Reply all

Wed 1/17, 1:07 PM

DiCenzo, John;

EconomicDevelopmentCommission

#### Action Items

Hi John,

I did some AI inquires and here are five possibilities that may be worth consideration/discussion. Some of these may already be covered or planned by the Chamber of Commerce or other areas. Partnership opportunities could provide the resources needed to lead the efforts.

#### 1. **Small Business Forums:**

- Conduct forums that focus on the needs of small businesses, addressing challenges and providing resources.
- Offer guidance on accessing funding, navigating regulations, and leveraging technology.
- This might be a partnership with SCORE Fairfield County Chapter, or professional associations such as the American Marketing Association's Southern CT Chapter.

#### 2. **Job Fairs and Career Events:**

- Collaborate with local businesses to organize job fairs to connect job seekers with employment opportunities.
- Highlight the diverse job opportunities available within the community.

#### 3. **Community Festivals and Events:**

- Participate in or sponsor community festivals, fairs, and events to promote local businesses and create a vibrant atmosphere.
- Host a booth or organize activities that showcase the economic diversity of the community.
- An example would be home improvement businesses display/event

#### **Cultural and Artisan Markets:**

- Support local artisans and crafters by organizing cultural markets.
- Showcase the unique products and talents within the community.
- This might be done in conjunction with a scheduled fairs or other market event, and be a subset of #3 above

#### 4. **Community Engagement Workshops:**

- Organize workshops that engage the community in the economic development process.
- Gather input on community priorities and aspirations.

#### 5. **Customer Appreciation Events:**

- Support local businesses in organizing customer appreciation events to strengthen customer loyalty.
- Promote special offers and discounts during these events.
- Perhaps something similar to, or an expansion of "Restaurant Weeks"

Thanks, Tom

## **Smith, Alison**

Thu 1/18, 12:23 PM

I think this list is actually spot on. We should not worry about events the chamber does as well as it is not duplicative, rather additive to the experience.

Alison Smith

## **Peterson, Donna**

**From:** Donna Peterson <donnacpeterson@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 30, 2024 10:47 AM

**Why Wilton?** We need to ask our residents and businesses why they chose Wilton. Look for all of the benefits as expressed by real residents. We can even ask them why they think Wilton would be a good place for working at a Hybrid position? We would also be able to find out what they would like to see for growth areas in Wilton.

Can use the resources we used previously for distribution of survey, along with a possible direct mail questionnaire sent to new residents (over the past three years) of Wilton.

**Why Not Another Town?** We need to conduct our own competitive analysis on other towns in our area. Not Just About Their EDC – About Their Existing Assets (competitive advantages), Growth Strategies and Branding Messages. Each Commissioner to take 1-2 towns and report back. Identify the Towns together first. We should all look at what they are doing on their websites, for example, and then provide input for ours. Regarding the website, we can make some very general changes to update it, but then wait to use our survey results to determine what it should really look like and how it can best be used. If we make these updates to the website or even make a new town tourism video with the High School students. Then we can determine how to get others to see it. Once we have developed what our Competitive Advantages Are (through research), we can effectively communicate these through other targeted branding activities. Determine Overall Message Based on Our Competitive Positioning Leverage Our Current Social Media Followers by Using Unique, Targeted Messages Based on our Research and send existing followers to new website.

Determine other ways to reach our target(s) once they are completely defined. Continue to expand the reach outside of Wilton.

We can hold the activities, seminars, meetings, etc. that were previously suggested by other Commissioners to support local businesses. This will make existing businesses in Wilton very happy. It will position us as helping businesses.

**How do we extend our reach to find businesses that would relocate to Wilton?**

**Do we still want to emphasize why it is good to LIVE in Wilton to those outside of Wilton who might potentially move here?** If so, this would not just be surrounding towns but outside of the immediate region.

**Are we a brand?** "EDC" itself has meaning to the businesses, but not so much to Town residents. We represent both. It might be safe to produce our own things with a "Town of Wilton" tag/logo vs EDC.