



Town of Somers

Somers Economic Development Commission — Meeting Notes

September 29, 2026 | Town Hall, Lower Level | Called to order at 6:05 p.m.

1–3. Call to order, August minutes, and public comment

Attendance: Shawn Curtis, Karen Murdoch, Matthew Beggs, and Gail Kulas answered roll call. Melissa Zelek was absent. Holly Bonasera was not present at roll call but participated later in the meeting. Kat O’Keefe attended as a member of the public.

The commission approved the August minutes on a motion by Gail, seconded by Matthew. Shawn said the current format works for agendas and action items, but minutes need more substantive discussion notes for residents who did not attend. No public comment was recorded during the agenda’s public-comment period.

4. Correspondence

- **Chamber outreach:** Shawn reported that a contact at the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce had offered to connect him with **Justin Probanek**, who serves on its economic development committee. Justin was expected to reach out about a conversation on the EDC’s work and the chamber’s board-liaison program. Shawn had also spoken with State Representative **Kurt Vail** about Main Street, the Somersville mill property, and the commission’s priorities.
- **Public record of EDC work:** Shawn asked members to continue bringing substantive email updates into public meetings so residents can follow the commission’s work.
- **Zoning questions:** Outreach from property owner at **225 Field Road** inquired about potential development and sought zoning clarification. Shawn sought clarification from the land-use office, and **Jennifer Roy** reported that the parcel was confirmed as “industrial”, while any project would still require site-design review and approvals. The inquiry also highlighted discrepancies between GIS property classifications and the zoning map.

Todd Rolland’s infrastructure correspondence is recorded under agenda item 7b below.

5. Old business

a. Prior action items. Shawn reported completion of the BlueDot renewal/extension decision, mentorship draft proposal, September business networking event, and Four Town Fair participation. The attached agenda records the BlueDot database refresh at **\$390** and a one-year renewal through **May 2027** at **\$1,140**, when the investment is to be reevaluated. Completing those earlier actions does not close the new data-access and follow-up work discussed below.



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b. Budget. Shawn requested receipts and an itemized allocation of Four Town Fair expenses. The commission had approved up to \$500 for the fair; members discussed spending above that amount, but agreed that signs and some printing may belong under advertising or the September networking event rather than the fair. The final fair total and any overrun were not established at this meeting. Shawn emphasized that spending beyond an approved amount requires a public commission decision.

c. CCM Municipal Excellence Awards — SHINE. Shawn submitted a nomination recognizing Matthew Cox and the SHINE organization in his personal capacity, not on behalf of the EDC, because the commission had not met to endorse a nominee. The outcome was pending.

d. Support / Shop Local signs. The signs were produced and offered at the fair. Members stated that yard signs cost \$12 and sell for \$15, while window signs cost \$3 and sell for \$5. Their costs and proceeds need to be reflected in the appropriate budget accounting.

6. Committee reports and discussion

a. Business of the Month. Melissa's update, read by Shawn, set the **Fortune Fuel** recognition for **Thursday, October 1, at 6 p.m.** during the selectmen meeting. The Bra Ladies was being approached for October; a response was pending. **Mal's Tattoo** was discussed for November, without a confirmed presentation date.

b. Planned Development Districts / September 3 Board of Selectmen meeting. Shawn reported that his review distinguished a provision allowing a **Planned Development District (PDD)** from an approved PDD on a particular site. He said he had found no approved PDD boundaries or plan for the mill site. This remains **a question for clarification**, not a settled legal finding: Shawn also read correspondence from **Jennifer Roy** saying the PDD was adopted on **December 17, 2016**. He intends to reconcile the records with town officials.

Members discussed advancing the **existing Village Business District** framework while continuing to consider a PDD for the longer term. Shawn and Matthew will discuss how to carry that work forward. Reflecting on September 3, members reported constructive engagement with the selectmen, while acknowledging that a development approach had not yet been agreed.

c. September networking event — 596 Main Street. Members viewed the event as useful public-facing engagement. Shawn said all three selectmen attended, along with other town officials. Todd subsequently requested the EDC's Somers Center presentation materials for the Special Projects Committee. Members discussed maintaining momentum through future events rather than treating the September event as the end of the outreach.

d. Somers Center roadshow / community engagement. Shawn planned a Rotary presentation the Tuesday, October 6 at 6:00pm and a Republican Town Committee presentation on November 10 at 7:30 p.m.; a Democratic Town Committee date was still being sought, along with others. A



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three- to four-hour public workshop on October 17 was proposed, not confirmed. It's possible content included the Somers Center vision, the planned roundabout, POCD education, a Suffield example, and community input. Todd was to discuss town support with Tim Keeney. Members urged Shawn to define the desired outcomes before setting the format; Holly suggested the idea to have it facilitated so the presenters could be fully engaged. A playful engagement exercise was considered.

e. Four Town Fair. Members thanked Holly for leading the booth effort and discussed whether its reach justified the staffing required over four days. Ideas for future participation included sharing a presence with other towns' EDCs, improving signage and name identification, or comparing the fair with other community events. The group agreed to gather member feedback through an after-action review before making a plan for next year.

f. Business engagement — BlueDot. Gail was reviewing the refreshed business data and arranging a live call with Liv to resolve what she could access or export. Members discussed the difference between a public business directory and a tool for maintaining EDC business relationships. A possible EDC-controlled CRM was raised, but no migration or new purchase was approved. The number of businesses in BlueDot versus other town lists remained to be reconciled.

g. Business networking and mentorship. The **Somers High School mentor breakfast** was scheduled for **October 1, 7–8 a.m.** Attendees were instructed to bring a driver's license and park in the faculty lot. Gail was coordinating business participants and information for the school. A capstone event was being planned for January, with another mentor outreach effort anticipated in spring.

The commission **voted to approve two additional business networking events**, targeting **November 17 or 19** and **March 16 or 18**. Motion was made by Shawn and seconded by Karen. Gail will confirm dates and times. She proposed a vacant commercial property as a venue so attendees could see available space; no property was selected.

h. Connecticut Main Street Center. Melissa had begun the application, and Shawn said he would complete it the next day. Melissa would be the point of contact. Shawn described the initial engagement as approximately **\$1,000** and within the existing budget; further work or expense would be considered separately.

i. Special Projects Committee — 55 School Street. Karen reported on the reassembled committee's first meeting and its visit to **55 School Street**, formerly used by the Village Players and, earlier, as a Legion Hall. Todd was preparing an RFP for proposals to reuse the building and property; later discussion described the RFP as available for sharing. Its issuance status should be confirmed before publication. Limited parking and lack of ADA accessibility were identified as constraints. A Manchester shared-workspace model was cited as an example, not a decision.



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Shawn urged consideration of commercial-tax-base uses within a wider Somersville Village Business District vision.

The mill site was also discussed. Shawn described ongoing brownfield-remediation questions, conversations with New York firm **Kershaw**, and housing as the development concept under consideration. He said a prior **\$995,000 DECD grant** was contingent on a developer plan and should not be treated as funds currently available to the town. Development economics, the number of housing units, and remediation responsibilities remained unresolved.

j–k. Chambers of commerce. Holly reported outreach to potential guests for Tolland County Chamber activities and plans to attend multi-chamber events on **October 7 and October 13**. For the North Central Chamber, members had limited recent attendance and asked that event notices be circulated so another EDC representative can go when a usual attendee cannot.

l. Somers Farmers Market. Vendor calls were underway, with an independent market manager and suitable location still being sought. Holly said Jennifer Roy was receptive to reviewing possible locations using GIS. The group discussed town-property concerns and a vineyard as a possible private venue, but neither a site nor the necessary permissions had been established. The attached agenda continued to list the farmers-market draft proposal, owned by Melissa Zelek and Holly Bonasera, with its earlier August 25 target date; the meeting did not clearly close that item.

m. State organizations and events. Shawn distributed a one-page account of the September 23 Connecticut economic development partnership conference, emphasizing coordination among economic development, planning, and zoning. He also reported plans to attend the **October 21 Council of Small Towns event** and the **October 27–28 CCM convention**. The agenda additionally listed a **CEDAS event on October 21**.

7. New business and infrastructure update

Todd's project update, relayed by Shawn, covered approximately 4.5 miles across 19 roads proposed for resurfacing in 2027; an initial sidewalk phase near the schools and Field Road Park; a Maple Street pedestrian bridge expected to go to bid in 2027, with construction discussed for 2028; and a Somers Elementary School HVAC project planned to begin in 2027 ahead of the 2028 school year. The town was also pursuing a property near Bilton Road for an emergency-radio tower. These were updates on town work, not EDC project approvals.

For Woodcrest Phase 3, the discussion described a possible 20–60 additional units and state encouragement to seek grant funding. Members called for clearer public information on eligibility and affordable-housing figures.



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8. Action items and follow-up

Owner	Action	Timeline / qualification
Shawn Curtis	Reconcile the PDD statements and records with town officials; seek land-use counsel's clarification if necessary.	October 15, 2026
Shawn Curtis and Matthew Beggs	Discuss the handoff and focus of PDD versus Village Business District work.	Month of October
Shawn Curtis	Report back after Todd Rolland discusses the proposed public workshop with Tim Keeney.	October 17 is tentative; no workshop commitment yet
Shawn Curtis	Complete the Connecticut Main Street Center application begun by Melissa.	September 30, 2026 , as stated at the meeting
Gail Kulas	Confirm dates, times, and potential vacant-property venue for the approved networking events.	Target dates: November 17 or 19 and March 16 or 18
Holly Bonasera and Gail Kulas	Draft Four Town Fair after-action questions, collect members' responses, and bring a consolidated review back.	Next EDC meeting
Members with event expenses; Shawn to reconcile	Submit receipts and identify fair, advertising, and networking/mentorship costs separately.	October 9, 2026
Gail Kulas	Meet with Liv to resolve BlueDot access/export questions and continue reviewing business data.	Call planned for the following week
Melissa Zelek and Holly Bonasera	Continue the farmers-market proposal and vendor/location work; clarify the status of the agenda's overdue draft-proposal item.	Earlier agenda target: August 25, 2026 ; no revised date stated
Holly Bonasera	Review potential farmers-market locations with Jen Roy.	No date stated
Shawn Curtis	Continue arranging Somers Center roadshow presentations, including a Democratic Town Committee date.	RTC presentation discussed for November 10 ; other dates pending

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded, and the meeting adjourned. Meeting adjourned at 8:47pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Karen Murdoch, Secretary