East Haddam Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
August 5, 2021

Attending: D. Bergeron; R. Casner; W. McEnery; R. Parady
Absent: J. Albuquerque; W. Melon; M. Robidoux; J. Stone
Guests: B. Butler; R. Davis; S. Wheeler

I. Call to Order - Mr. Casner called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

II. Attendance – Mr. Casner noted that all of the Commissioners in attendance were regular members of the Board.

III. Approval of Minutes

The Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 3, 2021.

MOTION MADE BY MR. PARADY, SECONDED BY MR. BERGERON, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR EDC MEETING OF JUNE 3, 2021 AS WRITTEN. UNANIMOUS AYE.

IV. Old Business

A. Status Reports

1. EDC Chairman Update - Mr. Casner reported the following:

- He and Ms. Haines had met with representatives of CT Landmarks, the East Haddam Historical Commission, and the Rivers, Trails & Conservation (RTC) Assistance Program regarding CT Landmarks' grant application to design a bike/walking path on Town Street. He stated that the individuals from RTC were very impressed with the location for the trail and the surrounding amenities and he noted that he is very encouraged for the prospects of the grant application. He reported that the group will reconvene within the next 30-days.

  There was a general discussion about a new federal grant program to benefit outdoor recreation and the design process for the proposed bike/walking path. The group agreed that it will be in the Town's best interests to have shovel-ready projects available for potential grants.

- A Public Hearing is scheduled for August 24th to consider, among other agenda items, changes to the Zoning regulations related to the Moodus business center and Home Occupations. Mr. Casner stated he will attend the Hearing and provided the Commissioners with the draft revisions. He asked the Commissioners to send him any changes/questions/comments they have regarding the proposed regulations prior to the August 24th Hearing.

  There was a general discussion regarding the Home Occupations regulations and Mr. Casner advised that P&Z is also proposing changes that will allow residential units in the Moodus business district. He noted that another significant change to the Moodus business district Zoning regulations is that new businesses should be street-facing and parking should be behind the buildings.

  There was a brief discussion regarding a walking path in the Moodus business district.

2. First Selectman Update – First Selectman Smith reported the following:

   - The Town budget passed in the second referendum.

   - A recently established Broadband Committee is expected to present their recommendations to the Board of Selectmen at its September 15th meeting.

   - Legislation proposed by the state's Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA) for One-Touch utility pole work recently passed which should speed-up repairs/replacement of utility wires.

   - Work on the Getaway camp site is progressing and they are projecting a November 2021 opening.

   - The Public Hearing for the Swing Bridge Landing is tentatively planned for late September.

   - CT DOT has completed its ledge work project on Route 149. Some damage to Creek Row occurred as a result of detoured trucks and will have to be repaired by the Public Works Department.

   - The Town hosted a meeting with the CT DOT and local businesses to discuss the proposed Swingbridge repair project. Mr. Smith noted that twenty-five 63-hour bridge closures are scheduled as well as a 2-month full closure in the winter. He provided a brief overview of the project and advised that the Chamber of Commerce will host a meeting to establish a sub-committee for the purposes of facilitating communications between the CT DOT and local businesses regarding the Swingbridge project.

     Mr. Smith noted that there it will be challenging to get into, out of, and around Town for the next 24-months due to a number of CT DOT bridge and road projects.

   - The Town recently received inquiries about several business properties in the Moodus area.

   Mr. Smith also provided an update on the increase in the rate of positive COVID cases in the state.

3. Economic Development Administrator Report – Ms. Haines provided the following report:

   - The Business Bingo game appeared to be a success with numerous businesses participating and providing prizes.

   - Due to a surplus of 2020 Business Guides and the fact that there were few changes in 2021, she did not order a re-printing. She is still supplying the Guides to I-95 Visitor Centers and local businesses and tourism sites.

   - Wolf's Den was the July/August Business of the Month and a picture should be in one of the next editions of the East Haddam News.

   - An Arts Festival will be held on the Goodspeed green on Saturday, August 7th from 11:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Mr. Casner recommended sending a letter to the Goodspeed Board of Directors to thank them for their community support. There was a brief discussion regarding recent grant awards to the Goodspeed Theatre.

- Planning for the Business Association's September 4th Celebrate East Haddam event is going very well. The festival will be held on the Airport grounds and approximately 120 vendors and 12-15 food trucks have signed up for the event. A parachute display and other activities are planned.

  Ms. Haynes suggested EDC support the event by a donating funds to cover the cost of an insert and/or ad in the East Haddam News. She advised that the cost to design/print/insert the flier is approximately $525.00 and a ¼ to ½ page ad would be $200-300.00.

- She and Ryan Davis are currently working on organizing the signature events for the Fall Festival. The Festival will be held over the weekend of October 2-3.

Mr. Smith advised that the annual fall Thunder in the Valley event may be cancelled this year due to COVID concerns.

MOTION MADE BY MR. BERGERON, SECONDED BY MR. McENERY, TO APPROVE AN EXPENDITURE FROM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT'S BUDGET OF NO GREATER THAN $900.00 TO PROMOTE THE 2021 CELEBRATE EAST HADDAM EVENT VIA THE EAST HADDAM NEWS.

Mr. Casner noted that he is on the Board of the East Haddam News and, therefore, abstained from voting and the motion passed by a majority of Ayes.

4. EDC/PZC Sub-Committees

   a. Moodus Center/Town Street South – Possible New Regulations - Mr. Casner reported on this item during his EDC Chairman's update report and his comments are covered in the minutes above under that agenda item.

   b. Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program – Mr. Casner reported on this item during the EDC Chairman's update report and his comments are covered in the minutes above under that agenda item.

5. East Haddam Business Association

   a. Open Space Commission – Name Representative – Mr. Casner reported that Commissioners Stone and Robidoux have agreed to co-represent EDC at the Open Space Commission meetings. He noted that Ms. Stone will be the primary EDC representative and Mr. Robidoux will attend the meetings when Ms. Stone is unable to. He stated that he would send a letter to the Open Space Commission advising them of same.

   b. Commission on Aging (Joseph Sina) – Welcome Wagon initiative – Mr. Casner reported that he anticipated that Ms. Stone will have an update on the Welcome Wagon initiative at EDC's September meeting.

V. New Business

A. Tax Incentive Program – Scully Land Development LLC Application

Mr. Casner reported that Scully Land Development LLC has submitted a Tax Incentive application. He advised that a copy will be sent to the First Selectman and that Ms. Haines will review the application with the Tax Assessor. He expects EDC can entertain a formal recommendation to the Board of Selectmen at its September meeting.

B. Business of the Month – Nomination and Vote

Ms. Haines reported that they are on-track to present the previously nominated and approved September Business of the Month award to Roots Salon.

C. Recommendation for Commission Membership – Ryan Davis

Mr. Casner advised that Mr. Davis had submitted a completed application to the First Selectman's office and noted that the EDC Commissioners had passed a provisional motion at their June meeting to recommend Mr. Davis to the Board of Selectmen as an alternate member of EDC.

In response to a request from Mr. Smith, Ms. Haines agreed to send him an email reiterating EDC's recommendation.

D. Goodspeed Landing / Swingbridge Project

Other than the First Selectman's comments on this project during his report earlier in the meeting, there was no new update on this agenda item.

VI. Public Comment

Mr. Bruce Butler thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to attend the meeting and stated that he looked forward to continuing to be involved with EDC activities. There was a general discussion regarding whether or not there is a vacant alternate position available on the Commission.

Mr. Davis stated that he was pleased to meet the EDC Commissioners and he has enjoyed assisting Ms. Haines on the Business Bingo promotion. He stated that the East Haddam EDC Instagram page he set up is reaching a younger demographic and currently has over 1,000 followers. He noted that he would like to add some pictures to the page in the near future.

Mr. Bergeron stated that Mr. Davis is a valuable asset to EDC because he will help the Board reach out to and communicate with the younger generation.

VII. Open Discussion – EDC Commissioners

There was no additional discussion at the meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL BUSINESS TO DISCUSS, A MOTION WAS MADE BY MR. BERGERON, SECONDED BY MR. PARADY, TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MEETING. UNANIMOUS AYE.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Recorded

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Wheeler