

East Haddam Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
September 3, 2020

Attending: D. Bergeron; R. Casner; W. Judd Melon; R. Parady; M. Robidoux

Absent: J. Albuquerque; J. Fennema; W. McEnery; J. Stone

Guests: I. Haines; C. Quinn; R. Smith; S. Wheeler

P&Z – C. Brownell; F. Dumaine; E. Gubbins; R. Petinelli; L. Salicrup

GAEC – J. Anderson; C. Beard; M. Callahan; M.J. Malavasi; J. Nowell; P. Stricker

EHVRC – W. Garrish

- I. Call to Order - Mr. Casner called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
- II. Attendance – Mr. Casner sat Dr. Melon in place of Mr. Fennema.
- III. Discussion of Potential Purchase of Airport Property with Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commissioners and Goodspeed Airport Evaluation Committee (GAEC) members

Mr. Casner welcomed the Planning & Zoning Commissioners, the members of the Goodspeed Airport Evaluation Committee and other guests to the meeting. He thanked them for their willingness to participate in the joint meeting to discuss the Goodspeed Airport property. The participants went around the room and introduced themselves.

Mr. Casner and Mr. Brownell provided some background regarding the Town's relationship with the owner of the Airport, Mr. Timothy Mellon. Mr. Casner reported that, several years prior, Mr. Brownell had learned that Mr. Mellon was awarding a fairly restrictive scenic easement on the property to CT DEEP and the Gateway Commission. Mr. Brownell stated that several Town representatives had met with Mr. Mellon and his attorney and negotiated concessions which would allow public access to the property, construction of docks, and boardwalks along the river.

Mr. Casner advised that the Town representatives had also requested a right of first refusal if Mr. Mellon ever decided to sell the property. He noted that Mr. Mellon did not commit to giving the Town a right of first refusal; however, he had sent a letter to the Town in October of 2019 offering to sell the property for \$1.4M. He stated that Mr. Mellon's offer had not been acted on before the stipulated deadline of December 31, 2019.

Mr. Beard, Chairman of the GAEC, stated that the Committee had been established in 2020 and that their charge is fairly limited to establishing a fair market value for the property and reporting their findings to the Board of Selectmen along with a recommendation. Mr. Beard advised that the Committee had been hampered in satisfying its charge because Mr. Mellon had refused to let them, and/or an appraiser, onto the Airport property because, at the time, he was in negotiations to sell the property to a third party.

Mr. Beard further advised that the Committee had also tried to evaluate the value of the airport business but Mr. Mellon had also refused to provide them with any financials. He stated that the Committee had solicited input from Land Use Director Ventres regarding potential uses for the property.

There was a general discussion about the numerous potential uses for the property and it was the general consensus of the EDC and P&Z Commissioners that the Town would benefit most, economically, culturally, and environmentally, from providing public access to the property rather than continuing to operate the airport. Mr. Gubbins stated that all of the goals for the Village area in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development would be met by a purchase of the property. Mr. Bergeron agreed that there could be many advantages that the Town could benefit from by purchasing the property; however, he noted that Mr. Mellon

has moved onto to another potential buyer and the immediate challenge is whether or not the Town can find a way to reinsert itself into the process.

The participants discussed how the Town might re-start negotiations with Mr. Mellon and Mr. Casner stated that he feels the best way to do that is to present Mr. Mellon with another, more attractive offer. He suggested that one possible option is to present a deal with a cash component and a gift tax-deduction component.

Mr. Casner and Mr. Brownell agreed that the Town should not delay in trying to re-establish negotiations with Mr. Mellon. In response to a question, Mr. Brownell stated that P&Z and EDC should not independently contact Mr. Mellon about the property. Mr. Casner stated that he believes the Board of Selectmen would be the appropriate group to reach out to Mr. Mellon and express the Town's continued interest in the Goodspeed Airport.

Mr. Casner recognized Selectwoman Quinn who recommended that the GAEC submit its recommendation to the Board of Selectmen as soon as possible. She suggested putting together a sub-committee of the individuals who had previously established positive relationships with Mr. Mellon and successfully negotiated several concessions to his easement restrictions, to approach him about the potential purchase of the property.

Mr. Brownell agreed to draft a letter to GAEC outlining possible uses and potential zoning restrictions for the property. Mr. Beard also requested EDC provide written input listing potential uses and benefits of the Town's ownership of the Airport property.

There was a general discussion regarding the second easement on the property and the deeded right to extend the runway by any future owner.

Mr. Casner thanked the P&Z Commissioners, the GAEC members and other meeting participants for engaging in the conversation about the potential to restart discussions with Mr. Mellon about the Goodspeed Airport property.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY DR. MELON, SECONDED BY MR. ROBIDOUX, TO SEND A LETTER TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN ENCOURAGING THEM TO REACH OUT TO MR. MELLON, WITH APPROPRIATE HASTE, TO EXPRESS THE TOWN'S CONTINUED INTEREST IN PURCHASING THE GOODSPEED AIRPORT PROPERTY AND TO MAKE A THOUGHTFUL PRESENTATION FOR SUCH PURCHASE. UNANIMOUS AYE.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MR. BERGERON, SECONDED BY MR. ROBIDOUX, TO SEND A LETTER TO THE GOODSPEED AIRPORT EVALUATION COMMITTEE OUTLINING POTENTIAL USES FOR AND THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE PROPERTY. UNANIMOUS AYE.

IV. Approval of Minutes

The review and approval of the minutes of the August 19, 2020 meeting was postponed.

V. Old Business

A. Status Reports

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

- Nutmeg Pharmacy has taken title to a parcel of land on William Palmer Road and is clearing it for its new building.
- Goodspeed Realty Company's application for a zoning variance to construct storage units on their Grist Mill property in Moodus had been approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

2. First Selectman Update – Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.
3. Economic Development Administrator Report - Ms. Haines reported the following:
 - The 2020 Visitor's Guides are being distributed and if Commissioners need additional supplies to distribute, they should let her know.
 - The 5-Town EDC group had completed its town asset spreadsheet and submitted it to the Explore CT Shoreline website staff who will use the spreadsheet to create day-trip itineraries.
 - Fall Weekend planning is in process. Ms. Haines stated that it has been challenging trying to put together signature events due to COVID restrictions. She advised that a flier listing participating businesses will be inserted in the East Haddam News.
4. EDC/PZC Sub-Committees – Discussion of the below two agenda items was postponed.
 1. New Business District on Town Street (Route 82)
 2. Moodus Business District
5. East Haddam Business Association – Mr. Robidoux stated that the Business Association has no activities planned at this time.
6. East Haddam Village Activities – Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

VI. New Business

- A. Tax Incentive Program Application – Mr. Casner reported that the Board of Selectmen has sent the following two Tax Incentive Program applications to the Town's attorney who will draft an agreement for signature by each entity.
 1. Staehly Farms, Petticoat Lane.
 2. Clark Gates, LLC, 382 Town Street
- B. Business Promotion – Mr. Casner reported that there was no new update for this agenda item.
 1. Moodus Area – Route 149 & Palmer Road
 2. Shagbark Area – Routes 82 & 151
- C. Business of the Month – Nominations and Vote

Ms. Haines reported that she is waiting to get a date from Mr. Maus to schedule their Business of the Month photo.

VII. Public Comment

There was no public comment discussed at the meeting.

VIII. Open Discussion – EDC Commissioners

In response to a question from Dr. Melon, Mr. Casner confirmed that EDC Commissioners receive completed Tax Incentive Program applications for review. He noted that they do not, however, receive the applying company's financials.

IX. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 pm.

Recorded

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Wheeler