

East Haddam Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2020

Attending: R. Casner; J. Fennema; R. Parady; M. Robidoux; J. Stone
Absent: J. Albuquerque; D. Bergeron

Guests: J. Anderson; C. Brownell; J. Curtin; T. Dumaine; R. Pettinelli; L. Salicrup; S. Wheeler; M. Zuba

- I. Call to Order - Mr. Casner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
- II. Attendance – Mr. Casner sat Ms. Stone for Mr. Bergeron
- III. Approval of Minutes

Regular Meeting – January 2, 2020

The review and approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 2, 2020 was postponed.

IV. Old Business

- A. New Business District on Lower Town Street (Rt. 82) – Mr. Casner stated that he had invited the Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commissioners to the meeting to discuss potential improvements and zoning changes to lower Town Street. He recognized P&Z Chairman Brownell who opened a concurrent P&Z meeting.

Mr. Casner reviewed a zoning map for the Route 82 area and called the participants attention to the section of lower Town Street that the EDC/P&Z sub-committee has been reviewing. He introduced Mr. Zuba, Director of Planning for Milone & MacBroom. Mr. Zuba provided some background on the discussions he has had with the sub-committee and noted a number of qualities and opportunities for tourism and business expansion on lower Town Street. He noted that grants may be available for sidewalks, multi-use pedestrian/bike paths, etc. Mr. Zuba emphasized that a clear plan, including zoning modifications, must be in place to capitalize on any grant opportunities.

In response to questions from the Commissioners, Mr. Zuba advised that Milone & MacBroom had successfully worked with several other towns in CT on designs for walkable village districts. He noted that the Collinsville historic district is very similar in layout to the lower Town Street area of East Haddam.

Mr. Fennema noted that there is approximately 25' of right-of-way on the east side of Route 82 and there was a general discussion regarding the benefits of installing sidewalks/multi-use paths and maintenance responsibilities. The Commissioners also discussed potential locations for multi-use paths. Mr. Casner pointed out that currently the Town recognizes little financial benefit from the 250,000 annual visitors to Gillette Castle State Park and noted that multi-use paths connecting Route 82 to the Park and the ferry dock could change that.

The Commissioners discussed the impact of zoning changes on the area's property owners and it was noted that lower Town Street currently has mixed use. They acknowledged the importance of maintaining the "look and feel" of the area and discussed regulatory and non-regulatory strategies that could ensure new businesses attracted to the area are in keeping with its existing character such as special exception requirements and establishing architectural and landscaping guidelines. Ms. Stone stated she would not like to see any chain or franchise type businesses in the area. The Commissioners agreed that the sub-committee should do the preliminary work on drafting such guidelines. Mr. Zuba noted that it will be important to document what the Town does not want created in the area as well.

There was a general discussion about the proper timing of involving existing property owners in the planning stages of the project and most Commissioners agreed that a draft outline of their concept should be prepared in order to have productive meetings with them. Mr. Zuba confirmed that he could facilitate the meetings with the property owners and general public.

The Commissioners discussed the scope of Milone & MacBroom's work with Mr. Zuba and Mr. Anderson opined that it would be beneficial to have informal discussions with several key property owners before moving forward with the contract. In response to questions from Mr. Brownell, Mr. Casner confirmed that the Board of Finance is aware that EDC is in discussions with Milone & MacBroom and that, if the expense is approved, funding would be through EDC's budget.

The EDC and P&Z Commissioners concluded their discussions and the consensus was to have the sub-committee continue to move forward. The P&Z Commissioners and Mr. Zuba left the EDC meeting at 8:48 pm.

V. New Business

- A. Business of the Month – Nominations and Vote – The Commissioners discussed several businesses and nominated the following: March – Town Tavern, April – EMP Apparel, and May – Wolf's Den

MOTION MADE BY MS. STONE, SECONDED BY MR. ROBIDOUX, TO PRESENT "BUSINESS OF THE MONTH" AWARDS FOR MARCH, APRIL AND MAY 2020 TO TOWN TAVERN, EMP APPAREL AND WOLF'S DEN, RESPECTIVELY. UNANIMOUS AYE.

VI. Open Discussion – EDC Commissioners

The Commissioners discussed Milone & MacBroom's contract and agreed that it would be useful to have them draft a concept paper to discuss with lower Town Street property owners. Mr. Casner agreed to talk with Mr. Zuba about a more detailed breakdown of the contract fee and staging of the contract work.

The Commissioners agreed that input from property owners will be critical to achieve a successful outcome.

VII. Public Comment

There was no public comment at the meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 pm.

Recorded

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Wheeler