East Haddam Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 4, 2021

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

I. Call to Order - Mr. Casner called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

II. Attendance – Mr. Casner sat Mr. McEnery in place of Mr. Parady.

III. Approval of Minutes

The Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 4, 2021. Mr. Casner recommended the following correction:

Page 2, Paragraph 2: "… *focused on designing a walking/bike path loop from the Rose Farms open space to the corner of Town Street and Mt. Parnassus Road and an additional trail from the CT Landmarks property to Chapman Pond…"*

MOTION MADE BY MR. ROBIDOUX, SECONDED BY MS. STONE, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR EDC MEETING OF FEBRUARY 4, 2021 AS AMENDED. UNANIMOUS AYE.

IV. Old Business

A. Status Reports

1. EDC Chairman Update - Mr. Casner reported that Hometown Market opened on March 1st.

Mr. Casner stated that many businesses in the Goodspeed Landing area had been seriously impacted by the COVID pandemic. He solicited the Commissioners' opinion about having Ms. Wheeler research potential grants and other funding sources to help businesses pay their utilities and rent and/or provide working capital during this challenging time.

There was a general discussion regarding Mr. Casner's suggestion and Ms. Stone stated EDC should not limit its efforts to the Goodspeed Landing businesses. Mr. McEnery suggested businesses might also need help navigating PPP loan applications, loan forgiveness assistance, and other services. Mr. Casner stated he would ask Ms. Haines to survey Town businesses to determine what kind of support they would like for the EDC to provide.

The Commissioners brainstormed ideas that might be of help to local business owners such as SBA and SCORE workshops, a winter/fall raffle involving a broad range of businesses, encouraging non-profits with grant funding to hire local businesses. In response to a suggestion from Mr. McEnery, Mr. Casner asked Ms. Stone and Mr. Robidoux to draft several questions for a brief business survey that could elicit insight into how EDC/EHBA can provide the most appropriate assistance and resources to local business owners.

Mr. Bergeron suggested categorizing businesses and potential resources to give Ms. Wheeler some direction for her research.

2. First Selectman Update – Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

3. Economic Development Administrator Report – Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

4. EDC/PZC Sub-Committees – Mr. Casner stated the Sub-Committee's next meeting is scheduled for March 10th. He stated that their initial focus is on the Moodus commercial area and noted that much of the Town's commercial zoning excludes housing. Mr. Casner advised that the Sub-Committee likes the model of multi-use buildings that would offer reasonably priced rental apartments above a street-level commercial businesses.

   The Commissioners reviewed a map of the existing and proposed boundaries of the Moodus Village and Town Street commercial areas. Mr. Casner responded to several questions.

   In response to a question from Mr. Bergeron, the group discussed the East Haddam News article about Family Dollar's interest in a property in Moodus and the public's confusion about that proposal and the East Haddam Village Revitalization project. Mr. Casner stated he would speak with Planning and Zoning Chairman Brownell about drafting an informational article about the Sub-Committee's objectives and goals. Ms. Stone suggested the article also educate the public about the limitations of a municipality's ability to influence new business development.

   The Commissioners agreed they would like to see new business development in Moodus that honors the village's past ambiance while incorporating updated features and amenities that will attract customers to the businesses.

   The Commissioners agreed that the Family Dollar project would have a significant impact on the Moodus Village. In response to a recommendation made by Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Casner stated the EDC/PZC Sub-Committee members will discuss the possibility of approaching Family Dollar to discuss their concept for the Moodus location.

   a. Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program – Mr. Casner reported that the Board of Selectmen sent CT Landmarks a letter of support to include with their grant application to the National Parks Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program. He noted that Staehly Farms and the East Haddam Historical Society also sent letters of support.

5. East Haddam Business Association – Ms. Stone reported on the following activities of the Business Association:

   - Representatives from the East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee and Nutmeg Pharmacy will provide updates on their activities at the Association's next meeting on March 16th.
   - They have begun planning for the Celebrate East Haddam event at the Goodspeed Airport on Labor Day weekend.
   - They are discussing how to host a Business Expo in the fall.
   - The Association is working on creating a coalition of towns affected by the planned CT DOT project on the Swingbridge. Ms. Stone stated that the EHBA's next meeting with CT DOT is planned for April or May. In response to a recommendation made by Mr. McEnery, Mr. Casner stated he would ask Ms. Haines to see what she can do about uploading information about the Swingbridge repair project to the Town's website.

Mr. Robidoux stated that Megan Smith will attend an upcoming EHBA meeting to provide another presentation how local business can post specials, coupons, and notices on the new "Getting Local" app on the Explore CT Shoreline's website. He stated that the EHBA has extended an invitation to the presentation to all East Haddam business owners.

B. Business of the Month

This agenda item was discussed later in the meeting and is reported on in the minutes below.

C. Open Space Commission – Name Representative

Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

D. Letter from Commission on Aging (Joseph Sina) – Welcome Wagon initiative

Mr. Casner reported that he had spoken with Mr. Sina regarding EDC's proposal for the Welcome Wagon initiative. He stated that Mr. Sina is very interested in moving the initiative forward and they have scheduled a meeting for March 25th to discuss the Commission on Aging's proposed involvement in the program.

In response to a question raised by Ms. Stone, Mr. Casner confirmed that the program will include both new residents and new businesses.

V. New Business

A. Business of the Month – Nomination and Vote

Mr. Casner stated that, due to bad weather events, EDC had gotten behind on the Business of the Month awards; however, he confirmed that Corvo Restaurant will be the March Business of the Month.

The Commissioners discussed several other businesses for the award, including the following:

- R.A. Parady & Sons Inc. for April's Business of the Month,
- Little Noises Day Care,
- Kindercare,
- Little Village Day Care,
- Hometown Market,
- Tavern on the Hill,
- Moodus Barber Shop,
- Deep Roots Salon,
- Scully Land Design, and
- East Hampton Overhead Door.

B. Budget – 2021-2022

Mr. Casner reported that, other that a request for $5,000.00 for Professional Engineering Services related to the proposed multi-use trail project, he had submitted a flat EDC budget to the Board of Selectmen.

VI. Public Comment

There was no public comment discussed at the meeting.

VII. Open Discussion – EDC Commissioners

Mr. Robidoux reiterated the need to get information regarding CT DOT's Swingbridge repair project up on the Town's website.

VIII. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Recorded

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Wheeler