East Haddam Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
January 6, 202 2

Attending: R. Casner; R. Davis; W. McEnery; R. Parady; M. Robidoux
Absent: J. Albuquerque; D. Bergeron; J. Stone
Guests: E. Glidden; I. Haines

I. Call to Order - Mr. Casner called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. Attendance – Mr. Casner sat Mr. Davis for Mr. Albuquerque.

III. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Casner noted minor revisions to the November 4th minutes.

MOTION MADE BY MR. ROBIDOUX, SECONDED BY MR. McENERY, TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 4, 2021 MINUTES, AS AMENDED. UNANIMOUS AYE.

IV. Old Business

A. Status Reports

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

- The EDC Administrator position was posted and three applications were received. He advised that the applicants will be interviewed on January 11th and invited any interested Commissioners to attend the interviews.

  In response to an inquiry from Mr. McEnery, Mr. Casner reported that Economic Development Administrator job descriptions from several surrounding municipalities, including Old Saybrook, had been reviewed and were very similar in content to East Haddam's job description. He advised that a few minor revisions were made to the Town's existing job description.

- He thanked Mr. McEnery for his work on the Light the Village Festival event. Mr. McEnery credited Lauren Pszczolkowski with doing most of the organizational work. Mr. Casner noted that the event, with a Santa fly-in at the airport, was attended by approximately 1,000 people and was featured on Channel 3 News.

- The Hometown Market is doing well and he is getting positive feedback from the community about the business.

- CT Landmarks has hired a consultant to research and make a recommendation for the potential uses of the Amasa Day and the Palmer/Warner Houses and EDC has been invited to participate in that project.

- He advised that First Selectwoman Haines had provided him with information regarding a $10,000 grant program for a woman owned business and noted several such businesses in Town.

Mr. Casner noted that there is an open position available on EDC. He advised that Liz Glidden had applied for membership and introduced her to the Commissioners.

Ms. Glidden thanked Mr. Casner for his invitation to attend the meeting. She provided a brief overview of her qualifications, noting that she had previously been Haddam's Town Planner for 10 years. She reviewed several of her accomplishments in that position and stated that she is now employed by Verizon Wireless and working with municipalities to expand their wireless networks. There was a general discussion regarding the changes in technology over the years. Mr. Casner thanked Ms. Glidden for her application to EDC.

2. First Selectwoman's Update – Ms. Haines reiterated her support for EDC and economic development in general. She also reported the following:

   - She recently met with Patrick McMahon, the former CEO of the CT Main Street Center, and they discussed ways to revitalize East Haddam's commercial districts. She distributed handouts that Mr. McMahon provided with recommendation for how to develop sustainable and vibrant downtowns.

   - She anticipates, and wants to take advantage of, federal funding for the development of municipal broadband infrastructure. She reviewed the recommendation of the Town's Broadband Study Committee and stated that creating a municipal fiber optic broadband infrastructure will help build the Town into a sustainable area where people want to live and work. She discussed the next steps in the process.

   - She is pursuing a composting program for the Town to reduce expenses at the Transfer Station and would also like to re-invigorate the Sustainable CT sub-committee.

   - She has been meeting with Land Use Administrator Ventres to identify blighted/abandoned properties and discuss ways to address the issue.

   - She has been working closely with several public safety departments and is talking with the Town's Ambulance Association about the possibility of constructing a permanent home base.

   In response to an inquiry from Mr. Casner, she requested he send her a letter requesting Ms. Stone and Mr. Robidoux be appointed to the Open Space Committee as EDC liaisons.

3. Economic Development Administrator Report

   Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

4. EDC/PZC Sub-Committees

   Mr. Casner reported that the EDC/PZC sub-committee has not recently met; however, Planning & Zoning is currently looking into parking solutions and traffic calming measures in the Moodus commercial district. He reviewed the updated zoning regulations for the Moodus area and noted that the next step is to consider potential business uses in the 4-Corners/South district.

   a. CT Landmarks EDC – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program – Mr. Casner reported that this group has a virtual meeting scheduled for January 13th. He advised that the purpose of the meeting will be to discuss ways to get property owners' input into the proposed walking/bike path project.

5. East Haddam Business Association (EHBA)

   Mr. Robidoux advised that the Association membership has declined over the past two years and the group is currently discussing ways to recruit new members.

   a. Welcome Wagon initiative – Mr. Robidoux provided a brief update regarding the Welcome Wagon initiative. In response to a concern raised by Mr. McEnery at the November meeting, he confirmed that the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program only solicits local businesses/vendors for advertising space.

      There was a brief discussion regarding the benefits of establishing a Welcome Wagon program and Mr. Robidoux agreed to provide a more detailed update at the February EDC meeting.

6. Goodspeed Landing – Swingbridge Project – Ms. Haines reported that she and the Town's attorneys have been reviewing state regulations regarding the role and responsibilities of municipal Redevelopment Agencies. She stated that they have determined that the Village Revitalization Committee has completed many of the tasks of a Redevelopment Agency; consequently, she has discussed updating the committee's charge and reinstituting the group into the Town's Redevelopment Agency. She advised that most of the existing committee members have expressed willingness to serve as members of the new agency and several other community members have expressed interest in participating.

   Ms. Haines noted that the updated charge and establishment of the Redevelopment Agency will have to be approved at a Town Meeting; however, she expects that can be done soon. She responded to several questions from the Commissioners.

V. New Business

A. Business of the Month – Mr. Casner advised that, due to the resurgence of COVID cases in Town, the presentation of the January Business of the Month award to Scott Energy has been postponed to February.

B. Nominate & Vote on Recommendation of New EDC Member

   MOTION MADE BY MR. CASNER, SECONDED BY MR. McENERY, TO RECOMMEND THAT THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN APPOINT ELIZABETH GLIDDEN AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER ON THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION. UNANIMOUS AYE.

VI. Public Comment

In response to a question from Ms. Gibbons, Ms. Haines clarified the distinction between a Redevelopment Agency and a Development Agency.

VII. Open Discussion – EDC Commissioners

Mr. Casner stated that he has gotten feedback from several property owners in the Moodus commercial district regarding the revised zoning regulations for the area, specifically, the requirement that that P&Z has architectural review authority over new applications. He noted that business owners are concerned about the potential for increased expense to them from such a requirement.

Mr. Casner stated that, going forward, he would like to do a better job of including affected property owners in future discussions the EDC/PZC sub-committee has regarding potential changes to zoning regulations. There was a general discussion regarding Mr. Casner's suggestion and Mr. McEnery recommended adding a regular "Business Communications" item to EDC's agenda. Ms. Haines suggested assigning EDC liaisons for each of the business districts.

In response to an invitation from Mr. Robidoux, Mr. Casner agreed to attend the next EHBA meeting to talk about the EDC/PZC sub-committee's work.

Mr. Davis suggested creating a business newsletter to facilitate getting information out to the business owners. Mr. Robidoux stated the EHBA would be willing to collaborate on the newsletter and agreed to provide Mr. Davis with EHBA's list of business contacts.

VIII. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Recorded

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Wheeler