Town of East Haddam
Redevelopment Agency
October 13, 2022
Adopted October 27, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Lord called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. at the Municipal Office Complex and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ATTENDANCE

Redevelopment Agency Members: Andrew Lord, James Curtin, Randy Dill, William DiCristofaro, Jacqueline Nowell, John Cotter, Thomas Sevigny, Gary Laskowski, and Caitlin Taylor.

Absent Member(s): Melanie Kolek

Other(s): First Selectman Irene Haines, Gary Bogan and Ruth Ziobron (remotely).

2. Approval of Minutes – Meeting of September 22, 2022

Motion to approve the September 22, 2022 minutes.
Nowell/Cotter **Passed Unanimously**

3. Audience of Citizens

Mr. Bogan asked for the site to be reappraised. He supported hiring a firm to review potential site contamination. Mr. Lord noted the hiring of an Environmental Scientist was on today's agenda and that the Agency was waiting for the Brownfield Grant funding to restart April 2023.

Responsive to a request by Michael Riley, the Fellner Associates previous power point presentation has been included as its own link on the Redevelopment Agency webpage.

Rob Smith and Marilyn Gleeson's letter to the Agency was acknowledged and will be included in these minutes Mr. Dill noted the letter asked for a meeting with Chair Kolek and suggested waiting to address the letter when she was in attendance.

Motion to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Smith and Ms. Gleeson's letter which will be included in these minutes with an invitation for Mr. Smith and Ms. Gleeson to attend a future meeting for further discussions.
Curtin/Dill **Passed Unanimously**

4. Old Business

A. Status of approval by BOS for RFP for TIF consultant

The RFP with price proposal must be developed by the Agency then sent to the BOS for approval. Mr. Sevigny is working on a draft proposal for approval at the next meeting.

B. Status of approval by BOS for hiring of environmental consultant

Mr. Lord is working on a draft RFP for Agency approval at the next meeting. Mr. Lord has been researching Environmental Consultants with experience with arsenic contamination and remediation plans.

C. Status of Centerbridge Group document

Mr. Riley will present a revised proposal at the October 27, 2022 meeting.

5. New Business-Nothing New

6. General Discussion

Responsive to a question by Mr. Curtin, First Selectman Haines explained the Redevelopment Map was developed by Mr. Ventres and included properties under discussions with Centerbridge Associates. These property owners were contacted and were in agreement to be a part of the redevelopment plan. Mr. Bogan stated his property was on the map and he had not been contacted. First Selectman Haines stated an addendum could be approved to remove his property. Mr. Dill said, if it's off the table with Mr. Bogan, that he guessed it would not be a part of the project.

Mr. Sevigny stated a Charette/planning costs could be TIF funded. The Town would be responsible for upfront costs which would later be reimbursed by TIF funding.

7. Adjournment at 7:40 p.m.
Curtin/Dill **Passed Unanimously**

Respectfully Submitted,

E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary

Dear Ms. Kolek:
We want to thank you and the members of East Haddam's Redevelopment Agency (RA) for taking on this important initiative. It is clear from the meetings held so far that everyone is fully engaged in performing their duties and you have a great mix of expertise to help you reach your goals.

We are writing to you because of some concerns we have after viewing the video of your September 22, 2022, meeting. We would welcome a chance to meet with you if you are agreeable to doing that. Otherwise, we ask that you read this letter into the record at the next meeting and discuss or respond to our concerns at your earliest convenience.

1. The impetus for the creation of a RA was due to the considerable consternation in the minds of many of East Haddam's citizens around the Centerbridge proposal. It is clearly stated in the State Statutes which apply to a RA that the primary mission is to create a Redevelopment Plan (Chapter 130, Section 8-127), which is then presented to and voted upon at a Town Meeting. Our concern is that you continue to push working with Centerbridge to create such a plan. That will cause a great amount of resistance from many citizens as it will indicate a bias and consequently, the RA would likely lose all credibility. We are not suggesting that Centerbridge cannot be the developer. In fact, having Centerbridge end up being one of, or the only developer would be a positive outcome because they are renowned and could generate interest in other developers wanting to build in East Haddam. However, there were remarks made in the meeting giving the very strong impression that Centerbridge's proposal, maybe with some modifications, was going to be your Redevelopment Plan. That makes it appear to be something that was pre-ordained or a way for your RA to move quickly. When some of the terms for members of a RA are supposed to be five years, it should be expected that what a RA is required to do will not be quick. And there is nothing in the State Statutes that requires only one developer for the area in your purview. It could be one developer or multiple developers. This is another reason to pursue form-based code.
2. When the Town of Preston got bogged down in their RA, they hired consultants to help get back on track. Among the recommendations they received were to create a list of guiding principles and charges/goals. These were included in the draft RA ordinance that was initiated by the previous administration in East Haddam. We are attaching it for you. We believe that creation of the principles and goals will boost the confidence of the public as many of the items listed will alleviate the concerns raised when the Centerbridge proposal went to Public Hearings.
3. At around 58 minutes into your meeting, Mr. Curtin reacted to Mr. DiCristofaro's remarks that maybe the Centerbridge proposal was too grand. Mr. Curtin responds that it's only 2.75 acres. But the purview of your RA and scope of the Centerbridge proposal encompasses much more than the 2.75 acres. The public did not solely have concerns about what might be put on those 2.75 acres. It is important to remember that the areas being reviewed for development by your RA are very different than what was being looked at by the East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee (EHVRC).
4. After Mr. Sevigny explained the process of a charrette, Mr. Dill asked, "What if we don't like the results of the charrette?" It is important to remember that it is the citizens of East

Haddam who are a critical component to driving this process to a successful conclusion. The citizens must be able to contribute to the Redevelopment Plan. The RA are facilitators and not the final word in the matter. Your members were selected because of their various areas of expertise and the public is relying on you to be inclusive. By simply asking that Centerbridge submit a 'new' proposal, and thinking that this could become the Redevelopment Plan you present to the citizens, bypasses the very charge that you were given. Again, is the driver your desire to move quickly rather than perform your due diligence and take the time that is really needed to develop an independent plan with updated citizen input? Using the charrette model that was done for the Plan of Conservation and Development in 2018 could certainly be a basis for creating a new charrette. However, that charrette was not specifically for the East Haddam Village. Also, much in the world has changed since then and it would be prudent to validate that input again. Many citizens are now more urgently concerned about sustainable development, the effect on the environment, etc. With new public input you will obtain buy-in from the citizens and have a greater chance of having your Redevelopment Plan pass more smoothly through a Public Hearing and receive a positive vote at a Town Meeting.

5. We realize the cost of getting to a charrette is considerable. However, Mr. Sevigny very clearly and concisely outlined the benefits to East Haddam. A charrette and corresponding form-based code for East Haddam Village will attract more development and make the entire development processes run more smoothly and efficiently. This is proven based on Mr. Sevigny's experience in Canton, CT. In addition, Mr. Sevigny stated that development of a charrette can be done quickly. It is, again, concerning that some members of the RA are worried about their time commitment. Was that driving the reluctance to move forward with a charrette and virtually no group discussion about form-based code? Although we understand time commitment concerns, it is not appropriate to even suggest that the amount of time RA members' need to expend be a consideration. No one forced the RA members to apply for these positions and the terms allotted to them ranged from one to five years. In addition, knowing that there was a charrette done in 2018 means that the time to create an updated one may be reduced. Having a charrette, and developing form-based code to support it, will enable future development in East Haddam Village to be a simpler and less expensive burden.
6. It is certainly appropriate to discover what the EHVRC has already done. However, their purview was only the 2.75 acres. The RA's purview is much larger and simply using EHVRC's data is not sufficient because it is outdated and incomplete based on your expanded area of concern. In addition, most of the RA members may not have seen previous plans for the East Haddam Village road(s) and other possible development ideas, such as the one from Mr. Fellner. These should be part of any RA study and considered for inclusion in any Redevelopment Plan.
7. Why are you not allowing the public to submit comments and/or questions during your meetings? Not all of us are able to attend your meetings in person when they are scheduled. Just about every other East Haddam Commission and Committee allows comments to be submitted by email *during the live meeting*. This would not require that the questions must be answered at the meeting. They could be responded to at a future meeting. Can you explain your reasoning?
8. When you held the Executive Session at your September 8, 2022, meeting, it was in the middle of that meeting. This required anyone who was watching the meeting live via

YouTube, to wait for about one hour until you came out of Executive Session. We ask that any time you need to have an Executive Session, you do so at the end of your agenda so that viewers or any public attending do not have to wait for the meeting to resume. This is what is typically done by other East Haddam Commissions and Committees.

9. In addition, it is required by the Freedom of Information Act that you clearly state the reason for going into the Executive Session. At your September 8, 2022, meeting you just said it was to talk to Mr. Riley. That is not one of the reasons Executive Sessions are permitted in Connecticut. We're sure you are aware of the five reasons Executive Sessions are permitted but just to remind you, they are to discuss:
    a. individual officers or employees (unless the officer or employee asks for a public hearing).
    b. strategies and negotiations about pending claims or pending litigation involving the agency or a member.
    c. security matters.
    d. real estate transactions by a political subdivision when publicity would likely cause a price increase; or
    e. any matter that would result in disclosing a public record that is exempt from disclosure (CGS § 1-200(6)).
10. Finally, the current ordinance unnecessarily restricts the area that should be included in any Redevelopment Plan for East Haddam Village. Many citizens envisioned a Redevelopment Plan that covered the entire East Haddam Village area. Doesn't it make more sense to expand your plans to incorporate the entire Village, thus creating a cohesive vision for all of it? By limiting your scope, it will very likely become necessary to create another RA when the areas outside of your current purview need to be developed. Page 66 in the Plan of Conservation and Development specifically mentions the following:
    a. "With the Town still seeking solutions on parking, circulation, infrastructure investments, and redevelopment efforts, the Town should seek to create a master plan involving The Goodspeed Opera House and additional stakeholders that addresses revitalization, parking and circulation, design and management of public spaces and branding. The Master Plan should be community supported and address the following areas:
        i. Develop conceptual plans for property redevelopment and revitalization.
        ii. Improve traffic flow, pedestrian circulation, and public parking.
        iii. Create a greater connection to the Riverfront by improving access in concert with the streetscape, public parks, and green spaces.
        iv. Create a branding and marketing plan to capitalize on theater/arts/culture theme for recruitment of retail shops and lodging accommodations."

    Let's take advantage of this RA and not restrict yourselves to a pre-ordained area as the sole focus.

We realize this communication raises several questions. As stated at the beginning, we are willing to meet with you to discuss our concerns in person. We wish to reiterate that we are in

favor of developing East Haddam Village. But it must be the right development. The citizens of East Haddam are relying on your RA to take the time needed to ensure that you listen to our concerns, perform your due diligence, and move this initiative forward.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Gleeson

Robert R. Smith

In [month/year] the East Haddam Village Revitalization Committee accepted a proposal from Centerbridge Group, LLC to develop a portion of East Haddam Villlage. This proposal was presented to the citizens of the Town in June, 2021 at two public forums. At those forums and as evidenced through numerous other public outlets, it became clear that many residents felt unsure of the proposal and questioned the preliminary figures presented by the developers and town officials. Others questions the impact on traffic flow. Even though there were some residents who clearly wanted the project to move forward, the Board of Selectmen unanimously decided, after a unanimous recommendation by the Board of Finance, to move forward with the creation of an East Haddam Redevelopment Agency ("Agency" or "EHRA").

The East Haddam Redevelopment Agency will have the following charges:

1. Develop a comprehensive *Master Plan* that addresses future development, marketing and branding, park spaces, connections to the river, parking, and pedestrian circulation in the East Haddam Village.
2. Managing and overseeing the development of the #1 and #7 Main Street in East Haddam Village. This will include the demolition and environmental cleanup of the site. The Agency will engage appropriate town, state, and federal agencies to join and provide assistance in remediating, renovating, and redeveloping this valuable asset.
3. Determine if the proposal from Centerbridge Group, LLC, or a modified version of such proposal, is appropriate for items 1 or 2 above.

Once a *Master Plan* for East Haddam Village is finalized and approved by the citizens of East Haddam, the EHRA will address the following:

1) Test the validity/sustainability of the vision outlined in the *Master Plan*.
2) Clarify realistic and attainable environmental and economic development goals and objectives.
3) Identify credible reuse options based on an assessment of the property's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).
4) Evaluate the *Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)* in relation to the SWOT analysis results and recommend modification to the Plan and associated zoning, as appropriate.

5) Assess potential ownership/risk structures for development, including the range of possibilities from direct self-development through different master- development strategies, including public-private partnerships to outright sale.
6) Assess whether EHRA's current organizational structure, as well as its current development, management, and marketing strategies, facilitate or hinder efforts to redevelop the property and achieve the vision.
7) Create a strategic action plan to attain the vision, including a 'road map' outlining the sequence of appropriate actions for successful implementation, and a potential prioritization of properties.
8) Develop clear criteria with which to screen, evaluate and prioritize promising opportunities as well as readily eliminate impractical options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set 5-, 10-, 15-, and 20-year objectives and benchmarks with accurate budgets, including sources and uses of funds.
- When build-out begins, continually monitor and track full-time job creation and enhancements to the Town's new tax base to ensure the development results are a net positive for the Town, understanding that each stage will not address both objectives simultaneously.
- Determine how best to tackle: (1) planning, design, density, utilities, etc. and (2) project branding, sales, and economic development.
- Re-affirm the Town's objectives for throughout the entire community.
- Understand which acreage/parcels are readily buildable, buildable with additional expense, and unbuildable.
- Review marketing and brokerage strategy and tactics. As the property moves closer to being "shovel ready," consider who and how to best secure tenants, users, and buyers/investors. Potentially consider multiple and/or specialty brokers. Regularly monitor brokerage activities, efforts, and results.
- Manage the number and types of residential uses on the site, being cognizant of the capacity of the schools as well as Town services (fire, police, highway, etc.). The current formula is ≤30% of the developed square footage can be residential with commercial coming first. The Town may need to be more flexible or re- consider the formula over time.
- Branding
- Develop a 10-year vision in concert with all stakeholders (public and private).
- Reuse of existing buildings:

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND RESTRAINTS

The Town has some major conditions and constraints which presently impact and influence the future development of the property. These include:

- The existing transportation and circulation network
- Two major issues stand out: (1) the limited access to the "water front" due to the steep slopes involved, and (2) the capacity and restrictions caused by the existing Swing Bridge

• Modification of the Existing infrastructure and the costs associated with those modifications utilities presently serving or which could serve the site

- The location and interfacing of the parcels relative to existing development surrounding the site
- The current economy, locally, nationally, and internationally
- The environmental remediation of the site
- The identification of several areas of the Village are subject to cultural (historical) resource management

  Further identification as to potential use of these areas as they relate to the "Master Plan" can enhance the "draw" to the development from an historic perspective.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS ANALYSIS (SWOT)

No thorough report would be complete without a "SWOT" analysis.

STRENGTHS of the *East Haddam Village*:

- Connecticut River frontage and the associated views from various locations on the site. Also, the potential marine uses this frontage provides
- The proximity to the major urban areas of Hartford, Providence, and Boston
- The vocalized co-operation of stakeholders, including governing officials, businesses, and citizens
- Regional success

WEAKNESSED of the *East Haddam Village*:

- There are significant limitations with the road network and available means of transportation to the site
- The younger people of the community are leaving for better opportunities elsewhere
- There has been a perception about a lack of opportunity for entrepreneurship, higher skill level/technical employment, and higher paying employment.

  For every weakness there is an opportunity. For example, it is our understanding that there are many in the region who commute more than an hour to work in jobs that match their skill set. It would be ideal if career and training opportunities became available closer to home, before these highly skilled workers relocate.

OPPORTUNITIES in the *East Haddam Village:*

- There are areas of the site which are almost ready for development
- Major distribution lines for sanitary sewer, gas, and electricity are presently available adjacent to or on the site.
- The proximity to major tourism attractions in the immediate area

THREATS in the *East Haddam Village:*:

- The bridge may go away in 20-25 years.
- Environmental issues, such as sea level rise.
- The accepted threats inherent to the development process which can or cannot be controlled locally
- Changes in Federal and/or State legislation and the policy, rules, and regulations adopted to implement such legislation
- The length of time required to obtain specific approvals and permits for development of specific aspects of the site
- Timing of development of the site and availability of specific parcels as they relate to economic cycles
- The creation of an adverse image if the site and specific parcels are not developed and marketed with due diligence in a timely way
- Not matching specific builders/developers and investors with the overall "Master Plan" for the development of specified parcels of the site

All these **SWOT** items must continually be taken into account in the development and implementation of a development Master Plan for the future of *East Haddam Village*. In the dynamic ongoing process of the development of Village town center and immediate surroundings, these items should be continually monitored. If new SWOT items are identified include them. If items change, modify them.

POTENTIAL USES

The *East Haddam Village* has the potential to be a revitalized destination in the lower Connecticut River Valley and perhaps beyond. Crucial to this concept is the selection and successful incorporation of key synergistic uses. The cornerstone of those uses is a village concept with retail, office, residential lifestyle. The village will serve as the center of an array of community and regional activities. As the tapestry of uses is selected, careful consideration needs to be employed to analyze the impact those land uses will have on the town's tax base and the creation of jobs. While not every activity will have a beneficial influence on both goals, the net effect of all uses needs to be strongly positive. It is also critical that a development master plan be adopted and routinely updated. Incorporating inadequately vetted use, may lessens the quality and intent of the project, which could have a detrimental impact. While the Agency recommends planning and selectivity, it is important to remember that flexibility is needed to discard what is not achievable or to incorporate new uses that match the goals of the redevelopment agency.

The East Haddam Village

The nineteenth century structures are the embodiment of the Village. If the redevelopment is successful, it would gain a leadership role in lifestyle living with shops, boutiques, restaurants and bistros, small office spaces, and residential housing. A well themed architecture will enhance the experience and desirability of the village.

Commercial

Consideration should be given for some office. Hotel or similar uses should also be investigated. Hotels will provide visitors to the area with alternative lodging.

Recreation

The river is an untapped resource in the area due to its inaccessibility because of the steep slopes.

Residential

Investigate the practicality of residential facilities marketed to older occupants which are in demand as "baby boomers" reach retirement age. A concentration of such uses adjacent to the *East Haddam Village* offers an attractive lifestyle for senior citizens. Condominiums or apartment with views of the river and beyond should also be considered.

Summary

The *East Haddam Village* is a dynamic site that can sustain a wide variety of uses. Careful master planning and updating will keep the project focused toward enhancing the Town of East Haddam goals of increased tax base, job creation, and keeping the ambience of East Haddam Village. A long-term perspective is crucial to maintaining the vision of the project.

Branding

In keeping with the town's desire to maintain its rural, agricultural, and historic integrity, this site is ideal. Investigate which synergies are possible with surrounding communities while building a new image for the *East Haddam Village*, keeping the existing character intact.

East Haddam should also initiate branding for this site on a regional level. We encourage the Agency to gather stakeholders, surrounding towns, or an infusion of new ideas.

Other

1. Both the Agency and the community should better understand the impact of various land uses on school enrollment and town services. Routinely monitor current excess and/or potential future over capacity in the schools. Routinely assess and evaluate the potential impact to town services on builder/investor opportunities. Make recommendations to Planning and Zoning Board and other bodies to achieve objectives being mindful of funding constraints.
2. Quantify the size, capacity, and current location of utility components (for example electricity, water, gas, sewer, storm water, other). Where possible, obtain costs for routing utilities on a lineal foot basis.
3. Research the availability of funding sources both public and private. In the public arena investigate:

    1. Temporary Tax Abatements – similar to the Town of Windsor
    2. TIF (Tax Increment Financing)
    3. Grants (e.g., STEAP (Small Town Economic Assistance Program)
    4. Other
4. Understand the State's 10% affordable housing requirement. Determine the town's housing mix and monitor changes. Be able to provide future builders/investors with updated requirements.
5. Current economic conditions make a master developer for the entire site unlikely. Determine the entity that will act, serve, hire or oversee as master developer to create subdivision of lots, utility distribution, grades, massing, drainage, street configuration, landscaping and setbacks.
6. Understand real property tax assessment and tax generation. Consider long- term goals and bonding capacity.
7. Document the entitlement and project approval process with a flow chart, explanation of entities involved, and estimated time to complete (to be included in marketing packet).