Town of East Haddam
Redevelopment Agency
February 8, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER
Mr. Lord called the meeting to order at 6:58 p.m. at the Municipal Office Complex and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ATTENDANCE
Redevelopment Agency Members: Andrew Lord, James Curtin, Randy Dill, Caitlin Taylor, Thomas Sevigny, William DiCristofaro, Jacquelin Nowell, John Cotter, and Harvey Thomas-BOF Liaison.

Absent Member(s): Gary Laskowski

Other(s): Toni Dumaine, Amalia Shatial, James Ventres-Landuse Administrator, Bob Casner, David Byrd-Goodspeed Liaison, Maureen Goff, Jim Damicis-Camoin Associates, and Ruth Ziobron.

2. Approval of Minutes – meeting of January 11, 2024
Motion to approve the minutes as presented.
Curtin/Cotter Passed unanimously.

3. Changes to Agenda
Motion to add "Worcester Polytech update" under Old Business.
Curtin/Dill Passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment
-There was none.

5. Committee Reports
A. Executive
i. Land Use Administrator Presentation on Village Zoning Regulations
Mr. Ventres presented planning efforts by the town pertaining to the East Haddam Village. These documents are located on the Redevelopment Agency Town website.

- The town office property is 2.75 acres. Midstate Regional Planning informed the town in 1974 that the site would not be sufficient for the town's office needs given the population.
- The 1981 Conservation and Development Plan suggested exploring mixed-use options. Additionally, there were opportunities identified, including the sewer treatment plant construction in 1993. In 1997 the town was told that the plant could be operated at lower costs with development of the village, and the town voted to cover the debt services. Around this time, a study committee recommended relocating the town office.

- 1997 a developer offered $3,000,000 to acquire the property. However, despite discussions and plans nothing materialized.
- 1997 to 2000, there were numerous community planning efforts. These efforts led to the designation of the 8 Mile River as a federally designated wild scenic area and kick started the town's Open Space program.
- 1998, an application for federal funding to improve the Villages of Tylerville and East Haddam were submitted but not successful.
- 2000, the idea of building a theater in the Williams garage was considered.
- 2001 and 2002, there were discussions about improving mobility, including a study and concluded relocating a section of Route 82 was not feasible.
- 2003, the Planning and Zoning Commission collaborated with the University of Connecticut on updating regulations and exploring Village District regulations. Discussions centered around growth principles, emphasizing the concentration of development in areas already impacted by human activity to avoid urban sprawl and promote the creation of a walkable village center.
- November 2003, various groups collaborated to craft vision statements, including the East Haddam Village Planning Group, residents, merchants and the Economic Development Commission. Concerns were addressed through public sessions and collaborative efforts to ensure community involvement and transparency in the regulatory process.
- July 2004, a Mobility Improvement study highlighted potential improvements, including fixes to Route 82 and the extension of sidewalks. However, challenges persisted, such as the need to balance development regulations with historical and environmental considerations.
- 2005, village regulations were revised to encourage higher density development, aligning with the historic character of the area. Flexibility in zoning regulations were emphasized, especially in the village district, to accommodate mixed-use developments and ensure compatibility with existing structures. Height restrictions were reconsidered to reflect the unique architectural landscape, particularly around the Goodspeed Opera House. Throughout the process, public input and regulatory reviews played a crucial role in shaping development proposals.
- By 2007, plans were in motion for the redevelopment of the town office site in conjunction with the expansion of the Goodspeed Foundation housing facilities, aiming to stimulate growth. Despite initial skepticism, subsequent projects, such as the Municipal Office Building completed in 2018, demonstrated the feasibility of these initiatives.
- Updates to the Plan of Conservation and Development in 2019 reaffirmed the prioritization of development in traditional village centers, leveraging existing infrastructure for higher density housing and commercial ventures. Collaborative efforts, including the installation of a walkway connecting Tylerville and East Haddam in 2020, further underscored the commitment to sustainable development practices.
- A question was raised concerning the flood zone status of the Williams garage. Mr. Ventres confirmed that it is indeed within a flood zone but explained that existing

structures could still be utilized, with adjustments such as raising the road surface and implementing flood retention measures.

- Responsive to a question about the feasibility of road configuration changes based on past professional opinions, Mr. Ventres elaborated on the challenges posed by topography and engineering considerations, indicating the proposed changes must undergo rigorous review processes to ensure practicality and alignment with existing conditions.
- Further questions were raised regarding environmental assessments and floodplain utilization. Mr. Ventres highlighted past assessments and emphasized the importance of adhering to federal and state regulations concerning wetlands and floodplains. He stressed the need for a comprehensive plan before undertaking remediation efforts.
- They discussed concerns about recent proposals for road changes, particularly regarding intersections with Route 149 potentially causing traffic congestion. These plans, both featuring traffic lights, were deemed impractical during rush hour. Other minor issues were also mentioned.
- Questions were raised regarding zoning and historic regulations and the flexibility of these regulations for developers to create plans aligned with the character of the village. Mr. Ventres referenced the 2005 Village design guidelines and emphasized the importance of developers understanding and adhering to these regulations.
- Mr. Ventres elaborated on how the regulations encouraged growth within a small area and discussed the necessity for developers to justify their plans to the zoning and historic commission.

B. Environmental

i. Status of remediation grant (J. Cotter)

- The Environmental Assessment Grant was successfully passed during the town meeting held on January 17th.
- The next step involves obtaining a signature from First Selectman Haines on the DECD assessment agreement, after which the RFP and RFQ can be posted for bidding.
- Regarding the timeline for selecting a consultant, it was suggested that bids would likely be received by May. However, it was acknowledged that reviewing bids and conducting interviews would take time, and a through process would be needed to select the most suitable consultant.

C. Finance

i. Camoin status report-Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) (T. Sevigny)

- Mr. Damicis provided an update of the progress of the TIF and recent community outreach efforts. Although the final product was not yet available, he shared insights into what was learned and discussed the next steps to be taken.
- It was emphasized that any agreements arising from the TIF district, including those with developers, would require legislative approval.

- Mr. Damicis outlined the key components of a master plan, including designating boundaries, considering debt financing, estimating potential revenue from commercial development, and establishing parameters for the TIF. He emphasized the importance of understanding the vision, development opportunities, and investment needs of the community.
- Mr. Damicis reiterated that the purpose of the TIF should align with economic goals and address both public and private needs. He clarified that the TIF plan could be customized to suit the community's specific requirements rather than following a standardized state application.
- Responsive to a question about the meaning of "support investments" in the project's purpose, Mr. Damicis explained that it referred to infrastructure improvements or other initiatives aimed at facilitating development and investment in the area. He emphasized that the language used in the project description would be determined by the Agency.
- Mr. Damicis stated there were several factors when determining the size and scope of the TIF district. He stated consideration for the need for public improvements that benefit economic goals of the district would be considered such as infrastructure projects like roads and sidewalks that support economic growth. He stated expanding the district to include these areas with these needs would ensure that the overall development is cohesive and successful.
- Mr. Damicis stated it was important to clarify that residential properties in the TIF district tax assessments will not change. He stated the TIF district only captures incremental revenue from new development, not existing property values. Plus, any potential increase in property value due to economic development benefits homeowners as well.
- The assessor would play a crucial role for tracking changes in property values and TIF revenue. The assessor would certify the initial value of properties within the district, and any adjustments over time are relatively manageable, especially with electronic data systems in place.
- Responsive to a question, Mr. Damicis replied typically financial discussions would be conducted in an executive session to maintain confidentiality. Third-party experts for review would depend on the complexity of the situation.
- Credit enhancement agreements are not guaranteed by the TIF. Each agreement is negotiated separately and must adhere to the district's parameters and policies. The process involves legal negotiations and approvals to ensure alignment between the town and developers. Credit agreements are not automatically granted and must meet specific criteria. This process ensures that agreements benefit both the town and developers and are thoroughly vetted before approval.

ii. Grant Research status report-Nothing new to report.

- Victoria Ebright-Grant Consultant is researching grant opportunities for the development of a Master Plan.

D. **Community Engagement**

i. Comments on East Haddam News/Meeting Minutes

- A draft article summarizing the minutes from the last meeting was reviewed. There was concern about the length of the updates. There was hesitation about potential abbreviations by the newspaper. There was acknowledgement that condensing complex discussions, like the one held in this meeting, presented challenges.
- Options for residents to stay updated, including attending meetings or watching recordings was discussed. It was recognized that summarizing detailed discussions, like those on tax incremental financing, is difficult but necessary.
- Plans to finalize and submit the updates were discussed, with members volunteering to provide suggestions by the next meeting.

ii. Evaluation criteria for potential project approvals

- Mr. Thomas outlined specific evaluation and selection criteria for discussion.
- Mr. DiCristofaro stated it was essential to have a written document compiling all the public input and Agency's agreed-upon ideas. He stated developing a master plan should be the Agency's ultimate goal, especially if there are resources available to hire a consultant to assist in drafting it.
- Mrs. Taylor stated rather than waiting for developers to present plans, the Agency should proactively define what they believe the master plan should entail, setting the framework and direction for development projects.
- The Agency will review examples of master plans from other towns to get some guidance.
- A master plan is crucial for attracting grant funding. It serves as a roadmap for development projects and ensures economic viability.

E. Legal-There was none.

6. Old Business

a. DOT Developments

- First Selectman Haines and Mr. Laskowski are working with the DOT. Engaging with the Deputy Commissioner for the DOT could provide valuable insights into addressing traffic and safety concerns related to the development plans. It is essential to ensure that any proposed projects align with safety standards and accommodate pedestrian needs.

b. R. Smith Conceptual Proposal-Tabled.

c. EDC Conceptual Proposal-Tabled.

d. Centerbridge Proposal

- Mr. Lord will contact Mr. Riley about bringing forth his plan to a Public Hearing.

e. WPI (Worcester Polytech Institute) Capstone Project

- A special meeting will be scheduled to review WPI student's Capstone Project study of the village.

7. New Business

8. Adjournment at 9:15 p.m.
Curtin/Cotter Passed Unanimously

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary