Town of East Haddam
Redevelopment Agency
March 14, 2024

**1. CALL TO ORDER**
Mr. Lord called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. at the Municipal Office Complex. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

Absent Member(s): William DiCristofaro

Other(s): David Byrd-Goodspeed Liaison, Maureen Goff, Gary Sikorski, Dave Merrick-EDC, and Ruth Ziobron.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**a. February 8, 2024**

**Motion** to approve the minutes as presented.
Dill/Sevigny Passed unanimously.

**b. February 28, 2024**

**Motion** to approve the minutes as presented.
Dill/Nowell Passed unanimously.

**3. Changes to Agenda-**none

**4. Public Comment**
Gary Sikorski stated he was attending the meeting to get a better understanding of the Redevelopment Agency's progress.

**5. Committee Reports**

**A. Executive**

i. Nothing new to report.

**B. Environmental**

i. Nothing new to report.

**C. Finance**

**i. Camoin status report-Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) (T. Sevigny)**
Camoin anticipates completing their report and recommendations by the end of next week. They intend to present their findings at the next scheduled meeting.

- **Invoice approval**
- Camoin Associates invoice # 20375 dated 1/31/2024 for $2,112.75.

- Camoin Associates invoice #20414 dated 2/29/2024 for $6,338.25.

**Motion** to approve the invoices as presented.
Dill/Sevigny Passed unanimously.

**ii. Grant Research status report**

Victoria Ebright-Grant Consultant is researching grant opportunities. They have developed a preliminary funding strategy and have identified 13 potential grants for consideration. They are currently in the process of contacting the administrators of these grants to refine their strategy further. This outreach is expected to help them consolidate their options to a final list of 5 to 8 grants to apply for.

D. **Community Engagement**

**i. Comments on East Haddam News/Meeting Minutes**

- An article was published in the East Haddam News last week.

**E. Legal**

- Nothing new to report.

**6. Old Business**

**a. DOT Developments**

Mr. Laskowski reported that there had been a recent procedural change at the Department of Operations. He stated that they had initially adopted a top-down approach, which was met with favorable responses from the commissioner's office. However, with the new changes, they needed to reassess and potentially re-engage with the higher-ups to continue discussions.

**b. Review of Conceptual proposals**

**i. T. Gelston conceptual proposal**
**ii. R. Smith conceptual proposal**
**iii. Economic Development Commission conceptual proposal**
**iv. WPI conceptual proposal**

The Agency discussed the conceptual proposals amidst their broader goal of formulating a Redevelopment strategy. Recognizing the significance of traffic concerns as part of a larger plan, they acknowledged the need to involve the Department of Transportation, especially since the roads are state-owned and progress hinges on meeting state requirements. The Agency plans to consult the Department of Operations once a solid proposal is in place.

Amidst varying opinions and environmental considerations, the benefit of discussing these proposals was questioned in the absence of financial backing or a definitive plan. There was consensus on the problematic nature of current road conditions; however, the decision to construct new roads given the limited land was debatable.

The Agency agreed to defer these traffic proposals, as they diverged from the intended Redevelopment objectives. Jim Ventre's presentation noted that the Department of Operations had historically rejected significant road alterations for over 15 years. The concepts under consideration were primarily focused on resolving traffic issues, not the comprehensive scope of Redevelopment.

Dave Merrick expressed concerns about the viability of Redevelopment without a well-defined road layout. He pointed out the potential safety risks associated with Rob Smith's proposal for a one-way traffic circle and emphasized the necessity for improved traffic management. This need becomes particularly acute when detours from I-95 channel heavy traffic onto local roads, leading to considerable disturbances.

**Motion** to cease further consideration of the proposed conceptual plans because they are not redevelopment plans.
Dill/Curtin Passed unanimously.

**c. Centerbridge Proposal**

Mr. Lord relayed Jeff Riley's communication outlining a four-step plan for progress: detailing the process, conducting an on-site tour, revisiting Centribridge's Redevelopment Plan's key points, and examining the project's financial dimensions. The Agency favored a methodical, meeting-by-meeting strategy, stressing the need for neutrality and consideration of historical context and public opinion. The significance of financial sustainability and comprehending the developer's fiscal strength was a topic of discussion.

Agency members showed enthusiasm for the site visit to obtain a deeper understanding. The Town's financial engagement was also deliberated, including the possibility of bonding for infrastructure enhancements and the benefits from Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds. They explored alternative financial approaches, like allocating yearly budgets for village upgrades, which could be a more direct and beneficial substitute for a TIF.

**Motion** to move forward and schedule 2 meetings with Mr. Riley to present his Redevelopment plan on April 11th's regular meeting and a Site Walk on April 13th.
Curtin/Dill Passed Unanimously.

**7. New Business**

Mr. Laskowski opened discussions regarding asking the town to purchase for sale properties. In the village, properties are currently on the market at discounted rates, presenting a unique opportunity for long-term development and the potential to improve collaborative efforts on state road projects. The acquisition of these properties could significantly enhance the village's development prospects. The Selectman and the Board of Finance would be responsible for conducting price negotiations. There was concern that if external parties purchased these properties, the town may lose its ability to steer its development. It was decided to table this topic as old business at the next meeting and to seek public feedback.

**Public Comment**

Maureen Goff expressed her support for Jeff Riley's Redevelopment plan and bringing it to a Public Hearing.

**8. Adjournment** at 8:13 p.m.
Sevigny/Curtin Passed Unanimously

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary