Town of East Haddam
Redevelopment Agency
April 11, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER
Mr. Lord called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Office Complex.

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

Absent Member(s):

Other(s): First Selectman Irene Haines, Rob Smith, Bob Casner, Dave Johnston, Jeff Riley, Jim Damicis-Camoin Associates, Kim Root, approximately 2-3 townspeople, and Ruth Ziobron via YouTube.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. March 14, 2024

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

3. Changes to Agenda
Motion to move b. Centerbridge Proposal (Mr. Riley) next on the agenda.
Curtin/Cotter Passed unanimously

b. Centerbridge Proposal (Mr. Riley)
Mr. Riley highlighted a letter submitted to the Agency withdrawing his application to be considered further for the development of the village district. His letter is posted on the Redevelopment Agency website.

4. Committee Reports

A. Executive

i. Nothing new to report.

B. Environmental

i. The environmental assessment agreement has been signed and returned to Gregory Ambrose and the DECD. Jim Ventres and Linda Zemienieski are working on putting out a legal notice for the RFP and RFQ, which is expected to proceed in approximately 4 weeks. The environmental committee will develop a scoring method, with samples provided by Ms. Zemienieski, to customize for their use.

C. Finance

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

- **Invoice approval (Invoice 20490, $4225)**

Motion to approve Camoin associates Invoice #20490 dated 03/31/24 for $4225.50.
Cotter/Dill Passed unanimously.

ii. Camoin Presentation on Phase 1 TIF Analysis

Jim Damicis-Camoin presented "Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Master Plan Status Report, dated April 11, 2024. It is posted on the Redevelopment Agency website.

- Mr. Damicis is set to incorporate the financial data obtained from the assessor, fine-tune the presented data, and solicit feedback from the Agency to finalize the plan's specifics. The completed plan will be presented at the meeting on May 9th.
- The Agency questioned whether certain properties, including the Goodspeed properties and the airport, should be included in a proposed Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) District. There were concerns about the tax-exempt status and protective easements on these properties. The Goodspeed properties provide actor accommodations and cover a significant section of Route 82, while the airport property is under a protective easement and must remain an airport. The discussion explored the potential advantages and disadvantages of including these properties.

iii. Grant Research status report

Victoria Ebright-Grant Consultant has indicated that the final funding strategy is being concluded. A meeting with the finance committee is planned for next week to discuss further details. The Grant Consultant has connected with various agencies, including the USDA and the state historic preservation office, to explore funding opportunities.

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

Agency members discussed the need for active engagement with the Department of Transportation. Suggestions were made to establish a formal committee to engage with the DOT more effectively, but some members expressed skepticism about the feasibility of this approach due to the DOT's bureaucratic nature. It was noted that the DOT operates reactively and that any plans would need to be initiated by the town. Despite recognizing the challenges, there was a consensus on the importance of continuing efforts to engage with the DOT and keep the project on their radar.

c. Discussion regarding potential recommendations to the Board of Selectmen to purchase one or more of the inactive properties in the Village district.

Agency members discussed the idea of purchasing vacant properties in the area for redevelopment purposes. Members discussed the potential benefits of expanding the developable site, addressing issues like vacant buildings and the limited size of the current area. Concerns were raised about the financial implications, control over the properties, and the potential hurdles of public input. The discussion also touched on the role of the Town and the need for a clear plan before taking any action. Overall, there was an agreement to continue discussing the matter and gather more information before making any decisions.

7. New Business

Public Comment

A member of the audience raised concern about the repercussions of restricting public purchases to certain properties, emphasizing that by doing so, opportunities for gradual development by individual developers would be lost.

Kim Root expressed frustration at the lack of progress in redeveloping the village over the past 20 years. She highlighted the need for urgency and questioned what it would take for the Agency to be ready to work with a developer and move forward with a plan. Agency members acknowledged the frustration over the lack of progress and the setback caused by Mr. Riley's plan being taken off the table. They highlighted political obstacles, mentioning a failed chance for a referendum by a previous Selectman. They emphasized the urgency of focusing on remediation plans and financial considerations with a TIF. Ms. Root stated she appreciated the boldness of considering property purchases, but questioned if it would detract from necessary preparations for selling to a developer.

Responsive to a question by Dave Johnston, Mr. Lord reviewed the status of the remediation grant and DECD Assistance Agreement accepting a $200,000 grant.

8. Adjournment at 9:12 p.m.

Dill/Curtin Passed Unanimously

Respectfully Submitted,
E. Ruth Ziobron
Recording Secretary