East Haddam Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2025

Attending: R. Casner, D. Merrick, R. Parady, M. Robidoux, R. Scully
Absent: W. McEnery, J. Stone
Guests: J. Johnson, Economic Development Administrator Pszczolkowski

1. Call to order - Mr. Robidoux called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

2. Attendance – All members in attendance were regular Board members.

3. Approval of Minutes – Special Meeting of November 14, 2024

   Mr. Robidoux called the Board's attention to the minutes of the Special Meeting of November 14, 2024.

   MOTION MADE BY MR. ROBIDOUX, SECONDED BY MR. PARADY, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF NOVEMBER 14, 2024 AS WRITTEN. UNANIMOUS AYE.

4. Old Business

   A. EDC Chairman Update – Mr. Casner advised that all of the items he would report on are covered in the Agenda. Any additional updated was postponed.

   B. Economic Development Administrator Report – Ms. Pszczolkowski reported the following:

      - She is working with the Fire Department to organize an Easter Egg Hunt on the grounds of the Municipal Office Complex on April 19th.

      - The Farmers' Market will now be called the East Haddam Heritage Market. In addition to produce and other foodstuffs, craft vendors will also be invited to participate. The Market will be held at the Grange on the 1st Wednesday of the month from May through September. To date, 14 vendors have signed up and Ms. Pszczolkowski advised she will also schedule food trucks for the event.

   C. Sub-Committee Reports

      a. EDC/PZC – Moodus Development Plan – Parking Regulations – Mr. Casner reported that a Public Hearing had been held for the engineer's presentation of the plans for Moodus center. He noted that there was a small turnout of the public.

Mr. Casner stated that one of the goals of the project is to slow down traffic in the area. He advised that CT DOT has informed the Town that they will not remove any asphalt; however, they will paint turning lanes on the road.

Mr. Casner advised that the DOT representative expressed concern about safety issues at the intersection of Wlm. F. Palmer and North Moodus Roads due to very poor sight lines.

b. Route 8 Bike Path/Zoning Uses in the Area – Mr. Casner advised that six firms had responded to the RFP to draw up the plans for the bike path and the contract was awarded to Freeman Companies, an engineering firm out of Hartford, for $45k.

Mr. Casner stated that the bike path will run from Rose Farm to Daniels Road and will be to the side of and off the state road. In response to a question from Mr. Scully, Mr. Casner stated that the path will be seasonal and there is no requirement for the owners of the property the path runs through to clear snow or icy from it.

i. Overlay Zone Regulations – Mr. Casner explained that an "Overlay Zone" is one in which the existing uses and rights are kept in place and an additional number of approved uses are added to it. He called the Board's attention to a draft document proposing an overlay zone for the "South Town Street Village District".

Mr. Casner displayed a map of the area along Route 151/Town Street that encompasses the zone for which he'd like to ask the Planning & Zoning Commission to consider approving an overlay zone. He stated that the goal of this initiative is to bring non-conforming business in the zone into compliance and expand the uses to include some complimentary commercial uses.

Mr. Casner reviewed zoning restrictions that are limiting the growth of several of the existing businesses in the area. He referenced the need for more apartments and lodging in the Town and noted that the draft for the proposed overlay zone addresses those issues. He asked the Commissioners to review the draft proposal for an overlay zone in the South Town Street Village District and provide him with feedback.

There was a general discussion about the proposal and Mr. Casner solicited the Board's opinion on whether or not to recommend to P&Z that they consider approval of the proposed overlay zone. The Commissioners' informed Mr. Casner that they support this initiative.

D. East Haddam Business Association Update – Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

E. Black Birch Golf Course – Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

5. New Business

A. Report on Meeting with the Chamber of Commerce – M. Robidoux – Mr. Robidoux reported that the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce hosts a monthly EDC Consortium and noted that anyone is welcome to attend. He advised that the speaker at the February EDC Consortium was the developer for the property in Portland at the corner of Main Street and Route 66. There was a general discussion regarding the marketability of the town of Portland.

Mr. Robidoux stated that the Consortium meetings are generally very informative and he encouraged the Commissioners to attend. He stated that the next meeting is on March 11th at 8:30 a.m. at the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce.

B. Report on Meeting with COG – M. Robidoux – Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

C. Tax Incentive Program Application – 9 Main Street – Mr. Casner introduced Mr. Johnson and asked him to tell the Board about his business.

Mr. Johnson stated that he is opening a new restaurant in the old LaVita Gustosa space. The restaurant will be called Se La Vie, will be open for lunch and dinner, have a full bar, service on the patio and live entertainment on Friday and Saturday nights. He advised that he is hoping for an April opening.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Johnson, Mr. Casner confirmed that he would have EDC's support for an approval of his TIP application.

In response to a request from Mr. Scully, Mr. Casner reviewed the process and benefits of the Tax Incentive Program.

D. Business(es) of the Month – Mr. Robidoux recommended the Home Town Market in Moodus for the next Business of the Month.

6. Adjournment

MOTION MADE BY MR. ROBIDOUX, SECONDED BY MR. PARADY, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. UNANIMOUS AYE.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
/s/
Sharon Wheeler
Recording Secretary