

**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION  
TOWN OF EAST HADDAM  
LAND USE OFFICE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
February 25, 2014  
(Not yet approved by the Commission)**

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Brownell called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. at the Town Grange.

**2. ATTENDANCE:**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Crary Brownell – Chairman, James Curtin (regular member), Bernard Gillis (regular member), Ed Gubbins (alternate member), Martha Hansen (alternate member), Richard Pettinelli (alternate member) (arrived 7:20 p.m.), Harvey Thomas (regular member)

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Kevin Matthews (regular member), Louis Salicrup (regular member), Jessica Stone (alternate member)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** James Ventres and 4 townspeople were present.

Mr. Brownell appointed Ms. Hansen to vote in place of Mr. Matthews this evening.

**3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the February 11, 2014 meeting were approved with the following amendments:

- Page 2, Item 7A, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, last sentence: Replace “this” with “the survey”

**4. BILLS**

Suburban Stationers	\$79.44
(paper for map printer)	

**Motion by Mr. Curtin, seconded by Mr. Gubbins to pay the bills. Motion carried by unanimous vote.**

**5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND SET HEARING DATES**

None

**6. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Pettinelli arrived at 7:20 p.m. Mr. Brownell appointed him to vote in place of Mr. Salicrup this evening.

Mr. Robert Casner addressed the commission. He was present this evening along with Ms. Deb

Mathiasen and Mr. Peter Simmons of the EDC.

Mr. Casner distributed suggested revisions to the Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Thomas asked if this was intended to replace the Economic Strength Chapter from the Plan of Conservation and Development, to which Mr. Casner responded affirmatively.

Mr. Casner first noted that many people want to have businesses in town. Responsive to inquiry by Mr. Gillis, Mr. Casner stated they are looking for a mixture of residential and commercial. He noted that East Haddam's current tax base is comprised of 82% residential properties. They would like to have 15-20% commercial properties. He referred to Whelen Engineering in Chester, and noted this was a wonderful asset to Chester. Another example is the Lee Company in Westbrook. Mr. Casner noted that Whelen Engineering is on approximately 20 acres, and the Lee Company is on about 7 acres. He also noted the Mislik Company, and a subsidiary of the Lee Company in Essex. If East Haddam could attract one of these companies to come to East Haddam, it would be a wonderful asset for the town. Mr. Casner believed companies would like to have some land, and he believed that if other towns could attract companies such as this, so could East Haddam. He would like to work with this commission on this project.

Mr. Casner stated they would also be working on tourism. He believed this could have an instant return on investment. Gillette's Castle has an attendance of 250,000 visitors annually. Mr. Pettinelli asked how to get people who come by ferry to Gillette's Castle to come up to Moodus Center, etc. Mr. Casner stated they would like to track from where these people are coming, and what they would like to buy. He stated the Goodspeed has 100,000 people per year. Other than the two restaurants in East Haddam Village, there is not much opportunity to sell these visitors much else. He believed this would be a big area on which to focus their efforts.

Mr. Thomas asked Mr. Casner to outline specific plans to obtain this information. Mr. Casner stated there is a proposal to take surveys at Gillette's Castle to see what they would like to buy in town. Ms. Mathiasen indicated the State also does some visitor intercept surveys, and they are trying to obtain this data, and to see how much of it they could use. She indicated they asked the 1700 visitors to the summer programs about this.

Mr. Thomas suggested if they are trying to survey to find out what people would like, that they try to cast a wider net, such as Gillette's Castle, and the Goodspeed. But also, to go to Devil's Hopyard to survey them as well. He believed it would be interesting to ask if they are looking for places to eat, or what types of services they would like. In addition, what types of restaurants, etc. He also commented about lodging. Mr. Casner stated they would like to have more bed and breakfast facilities. Mr. Thomas also suggested capturing what price point people are willing to pay. Mr. Gillis asked if the current bed and breakfast facilities sell out during the peak seasons. Mr. Casner stated they do. Mr. Ventres stated they had previously changed the regulations to allow larger houses to convert to B&Bs. He stated he would like to see something for lodging go into the parcel that the Town offices currently occupy. He stated there is a wedding facility across the river, and people have nowhere to stay.

Mr. Gubbins asked about the cabins at Grandview. Mr. Casner stated the cabins typically sell out before the sites do. They briefly discussed the Boardman House.

Mr. Gillis asked how many rooms were in the Gelston House. Mr. Ventres believed they had four rooms, but the previous owners did not have enough occupancy to keep overnight staff.

Mr. Casner stated they would also like to develop the East Haddam Village. They need to make a partnership with the Goodspeed. Mr. Curtin asked with the new actor housing, if the planned marketing of some of the Goodspeed's buildings was still going to happen. Mr. Casner believed they were using most of these, and that the Goodspeed would likely keep them.

Mr. Casner stated that someone received a tax abatement to renovate the UARCO building in Deep River. The Town gave him a tax abatement for 10 years, during which the owner cleaned up the building. The Town is now collecting taxes for this commercial entity.

Mr. Curtin stated if the Town was aggressive with tax abatements, they would get buyers in town. Mr. Peter Simmons stated they are looking at more aggressive programs for this, now that they have some experience with it. He stated it is part of the package they use in working with companies. Mr. Casner stated they have been working within the State statutes. They hope that it will be more successful. He referred to the old Go Fly a Kite building. They worked with a local company, and they were able to sell this property quickly.

The commission briefly discussed the Bernstein property on the corner of Route 82. Mr. Casner stated they received an approval from the IWWC, and they are working with a client right now.

Mr. Brownell asked about Whelen. Mr. Casner stated they have 500 employees. Mr. Brownell asked about the Plains Road area. He asked if that would be too much impact for the area. Mr. Pettinelli stated with a company with that many employees, there would be a great deal of treatment required. Mr. Casner believed they would be the most successful with the 10,000 square foot range projects. The commission discussed various places around town.

The commission discussed the Brownell building. Mr. Simmons stated he has been working with the property owner over the past year regarding space requirements, etc.

Mr. Pettinelli asked about the building near the Public Works building on Mt. Parnassus. Mr. Casner stated the Goodspeed purchased this building. He stated they have been hiring some local contractors for this renovation.

Mr. Casner stated the major things would be to work together with this commission to look at properties to set aside. They would like to look at 3-acre parcels, flat, on which they can build a 10,000 square foot building. He stated there is a definite shortage of high ceilings in commercial buildings.

Mr. Gubbins asked if Mr. Casner has identified any 3-acre parcels. Mr. Casner stated that Daniels Road, Taylor Lane, and Brooke Hill used to be industrial, but has since been converted to residential

subdivisions. He stated that Shagbark has some property that is flat. He noted that they don't have vacant lots right now where people could just come in with their financing, permits, etc. and build. Mr. Ventres stated they did look at this a couple years ago, but they can look at it again to see how many lots are available.

Mr. Thomas asked if the proposal was to substitute the new draft for a substantial part of the Plan of Conservation and Development. His review of the draft and the existing parts leads him to believe there are some differences, but they are not completely different. He asked Mr. Casner to highlight the sections that were different. Also, in the new draft, there are updated numbers for the Grand List. He stated these numbers should have been added as appendices, not within the body of the text. Mr. Thomas took strong exception to the "unfair". Mr. Thomas referred to the new draft for a new chapter – fiscal management. He believed this was more for the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Ventres stated this was why it would be important to highlight the changes. Mr. Simmons stated this was pretty much an entire re-write of the plan. He did not believe a lot of the information was necessary that had been in this section. Mr. Thomas reminded everyone that this section was actually written by the EDC when the Plan was revised.

Mr. Thomas referred to the C/B/IG zone in Moodus. He asked what evidence the EDC had to know how many people actually expressed interest in coming to Moodus. Mr. Casner stated they have had interest. Mr. Thomas asked if this could be documented without breaking any confidentiality agreements. Mr. Casner stated he could not divulge names, as people have not wanted their names used.

Mr. Thomas stated wherever they look, they would have to do something with infrastructure. There would be a question about who would pay for these improvements.

He asked what, if any position the EDC has taken regarding the middle school renovation. Mr. Casner stated the Town Office site needed access. A brief discussion ensued. Mr. Thomas indicated if the Town Offices were relocated, and if there was access, then this could free up valuable land. He asked if the EDC has taken any position with respect to development of the old middle school. Mr. Casner responded no. Mr. Brownell believed this was an unfair question. Mr. Casner stated this has not come up before the EDC. Mr. Brownell stated this has been voted for three times, and it has gotten shot down each time. Mr. Ventres stated this has never gone to a Town Meeting or referendum.

Mr. Pettinelli asked about water uses. He stated that hundreds of people come each weekend, pulling boats, and they cannot all live in town. Ms. Mathiasen stated they are looking at this under recreational uses.

Mr. Brownell asked if the town had considered putting in moorings to capture boaters. He stated we are the only town that does not have a town dock. Mr. Casner stated the Town has taken a grant for this. This is a start to be able to use this space.

Mr. Casner thanked the commission for the opportunity to present to them.

Ms. Mathiasen agreed with Mr. Simmons' re-write of this section. She recommended the wholesale replacement of Chapter 8.

The commission reviewed the planning & zoning section of the Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Ventres distributed the State's Office of Policy and Management *Conservation and Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut*.

Mr. Ventres referred to Chapter 13, Page 70 of the plan. He reviewed the existing plan policies with the new version presented by the State and they were as follows:

- Sections 1, 2 were the same
- Section 3: they removed "re-use".
- Section 4: one word changed
- Section 5 was the same
- Section 6 was the same

Mr. Ventres stated they looked at reuse and upkeep of existing facilities first. However, they still have the same objectives. He stated if the town has a plan of conservation and development that is out of sync with the State's, this could be a problem. They came and talked to the town about the IG zone in the village. When the town has any real changes to the zones, the Commission will have to make sure they are within compliance with the State's plan.

Mr. Ventres did not receive information from the other boards and commissions.

Mr. Brownell asked that Ms. Lombardo send the information from the Lower Connecticut River Council of Governments out to all of the boards, including EDC. Mr. Brownell will update the commission as he receives more information.

## 7. ZEO REPORT

Mr. Ventres distributed an invitation for public information meeting on March 4, 2014, at 7:00 p.m. regarding the bridges. Mr. Ventres has a WPCA meeting that evening, so he will not be able to attend.

Mr. Ventres stated he has not heard anything more from the attorney regarding the Milan Cais matter, but it is scheduled to go back to court soon.

Mr. Ventres distributed information from the Open Space Commission. He still needs to go to the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. He hopes to have this for an acknowledgment of a public hearing at the next meeting. The first property is the Lena property, comprised of 207 acres on Tater Hill Road. This property is part of the Eightmile corridor. The other property is the Zeleznicky property on Sarah Baker Road. This parcel is comprised of 19.26 acres.

Mr. Thomas stated there was an article in today's newspaper regarding funding for agricultural land.

Mr. Ventres stated they did hire Mr. Fellner as the architect for the agricultural building on the Harris property. The commission will look at plans at the next meeting.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Mr. Gubbins to adjourn at 8:53 p.m. Motion seconded by Mr. Curtin and carried by unanimous vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Pattavina