

**Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
September 3, 2015**

Attending: D. Bergeron; R. Casner; D. Mathiasen; R. Parady; P. Simmons (Economic Development Coordinator); K. Staehly

Absent: J. Albuquerque; P. Rubenbauer; G. Rucker; F. Weissbach

Guests: E. Blaschik; S. Link; M. Walter

Mr. Casner called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. He sat Mr. Staehly for Mr. Weissbach and Mr. Bergeron for Mr. Rucker.

Minutes – The Commissioners reviewed the minutes from their August 6, 2015 meeting. Mr. Staehly requested one change to the minutes.

MR. BERGERON MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. MATHIASEN, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 6, 2015 MEETING AS AMENDED. UNANIMOUS AYE.

OLD BUSINESS

Status Reports:

Economic Development Coordinator – Mr. Simmons reviewed his September 3rd report, a copy of which is attached to and made a part of these minutes. There was a general discussion regarding New England Propeller's tax incentive application. Mr. Simmons advised that there is an upcoming seminar at Middlesex Community College regarding state assistance for business hiring and related tax benefits, he noted that he also informed the Business Association of the seminar.

There was a general discussion regarding the August 27th Public Hearing on the Center for Community Agriculture. Mr. Simmons expressed his deep frustration with some members of the public's lack of respect and seeming unwillingness to work constructively with Town leaders and volunteers. Mr. Walter stated that he came away from that meeting feeling that the public in attendance did not want the Town to pursue any significant agriculture project on the Harris property and that the consensus was to return the STEAP grant funds to the state. Ms. Link stated that, as the Chairperson of the Board of Finance, she does not feel it would be fiscally responsible for the Town to return the STEAP grant funds.

Mr. Walter and Mr. Simmons asked EDC to take a lead in rallying public support for re-purposing the STEAP grant application because of the economic development component of the Community Gardens project. Mr. Casner and Ms. Mathiasen stated that they did not feel it should be the sole responsibility of EDC to encourage support for the grant and/or the project and noted that other Town commissions and volunteer groups have a vested interest in this project. Ms. Mathiasen recommended that representatives from EDC, the Agriculture Commission, Board of Finance, Friends of Harris, and possibly other Town Boards/Commissions should participate on a sub-committee to develop feasible plans for the project.

Mr. Walter and Mr. Simmons expressed their concern that the negativity expressed about the Harris Community Gardens project could set the tone for future economic development projects in the Town, in particular, the development of the Town Office Site in the Village. Mr. Casner and Ms. Mathiasen reiterated that a cross-section of Board/Commission members and the public should participate on a committee to develop potential plans for the development of the Village.

Mr. Parady suggested requesting definitive information on the cost to the Town of returning the STEAP grant funds to the state prior to the next public meeting on the Harris Community Gardens project. The Commissioners brainstormed possible uses for a re-purposed STEAP grant and agreed to hold a special meeting to discuss EDC's support for same.

First Selectman Update – Mr. Walter provided information concerning a small boat dock that will be installed at Goodspeed Landing. He noted that a grant will pay for the construction of the dock.

Ms. Mathiasen advised that the River COG is holding a GrowSMART open house on September 22nd to discuss a regional economic growth strategy for the Lower CT River Valley. She stated she would forward the information to the other Commissioners.

EDC Chairman Update – Mr. Casner reported that he had spoken with the Chairperson of the Haddam EDC and that the group is interested in participating in a joint meeting with the East Haddam EDC. The Commissioners suggested scheduling a special joint meeting with the Haddam EDC on October 14th and Mr. Casner agreed to confirm the date with the Haddam EDC Chairperson.

P&Z/EDC Waste Water Joint Committee – Moodus & Rt. 82/151 – Mr. Casner advised that the Waste Water sub-committee’s next meeting is scheduled for September 10th.

Goodspeed Landing Committee – Mr. Casner reviewed alternative access points for the Town Office Site. He noted that he, Mr. Walter, and Mr. Nemergut had met with representatives from CT Highway Department to review the options. There was a general discussion regarding the historical significance of the building that would have to be removed at the preferred access site. Mr. Casner stated that the next step is to survey the preferred access point. The Commissioners agreed that Mr. Casner should get a quote for the survey work.

Tourism Committee – Ms. Mathiasen solicited input on business’s receipt of the Tourism brochures and the Commissioners stated that they were pleased to receive the updated brochures. She also reported on the following:

- She is working with the Friends of Gillette to distribute tourism handouts at the two September weekend showings of the Sherlock Holmes movie.
- There is increased business participation for the scheduled Fall Weekend; the event is listed in the AAA magazine and possibly other publications.
- She displayed the “Welcome to East Haddam” lawn signs; twenty signs will be created.
- She would like to print 1000 copies of the Fall Weekend map for distribution.

MR. PARADY MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. STAEHLY, THAT EDC ALLOCATE UP TO \$200.00 TO PRINT 1000 COPIES OF THE 2015 FALL WEEKEND HANDOUT. UNANIMOUS AYE.

Mr. Staehly recommended that the Fall Weekend be listed on the e-List on-line calendar. Ms. Mathiasen advised that there is a \$25 fee to place a listing on the calendar.

MR. PARADY MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. BERGERON, THAT EDC ALLOCATE \$25.00 TO LIST THE FALL WEEKEND EVENT ON THE E-LIST CALENDAR. UNANIMOUS AYE.

East Haddam Business Association – Ms. Mathiasen reported that the EHBA is hosting a “Meet the First Selectman Candidates” event at 6:30 p.m. on September 9th. She advised that the event will be held at First Church.

East Haddam News – Ms. Mathiasen advised that the inaugural issue of the East Haddam News is scheduled to be published on September 24th. She recommended the Commissioners discuss how EDC should support the publication at their October meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Guests – There was no discussion under this agenda item.

Mail Received – There was no mail discussed at the meeting.

Public Comment/Other/EDC Ordinance Review/Other – Ms. Mathiasen reported that she is working on updating EDC’s annual report. She stated she will email the Commissioners the updated draft for their review.

Mr. Staehly noted that he received an invitation to a New England Economic Development course sponsored by CEDAS. The Commissioners discussed the benefits of a Commissioner attending the course.

The Commissioners discussed reaching out to Town Boards and Commissions, business owners, and the public to determine if there is any interest in participating on a STEAP Grant re-purposing sub-committee.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Casner confirmed that a discussion of the application to operate a food cart at the Moodus Reservoir state boat launch is on the agenda for the next Planning & Zoning Commission meeting

THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL BUSINESS TO DISCUSS, MR. STAEHLY MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. PARADY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. UNANIMOUS AYE.

The regular meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/ Sharon R. Wheeler
Recording Secretary