

**Economic Development Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2015**

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

Absent: J. Albuquerque; R. Parady; G. Rucker

Mr. Casner called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He sat Mr. Staehly for Mr. Rucker and Mr. Bergeron for Mr. Parady.

NEW BUSINESS

A. EDC involvement in FY2013 STEAP Grant re-purposing

Mr. Casner advised that the Selectmen have called for a referendum on October 1st for residents to vote on the following question:

“Shall the Town of East Haddam rescind the action taken at the Special Town Meeting of June 19, 2013 authorizing the Town to accept a STEAP grant in the amount of \$431,200.00 to undertake the Center for Community Agriculture Project and to enter into an Assistance Agreement associated therewith?”

Mr. Casner stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the request from Mr. Walter at our September meeting that EDC take a lead in rallying public support for re-purposing the STEAP grant. He advised that First Selectman Walter feels that the project for a Community Gardens Agriculture Center on the Harris property is no longer feasible. There was a general discussion regarding the amount of money invested in the project by the Town that would not be reimbursed if the 2013 STEAP Grant is rescinded.

The Commissioners discussed whether or not to support repurposing the grant to fund the demolition of the garage on the Town Office Site. Mr. Simmons reviewed the details of the estimate EDC had received for the project. He noted that the estimate was received one and one-half years ago and, given inflation in the construction business, he feels the cost of the work today would be approximately \$360,000.00

The Commissioners discussed the planned referendum on rescinding the grant and current toxic climate concerning the Center for Community Agriculture project and anything associated with it. They talked about the potential long-range impact on the proposed Village Revitalization project if it were connected to the Harris Property grant in anyway. They also talked about the intended process of discussions with other Boards and Commissions and other planning regarding next steps for development of the Town Office site. The Commissioners felt that there was not enough time for effective communications to occur in order to impact public opinion on possibly repurposing the STEAP grant for that use.

Mr. Weissbach presented a question concerning the consequences of a No vote at the proposed referendum and the Commissioners were unclear as to what impact a failed referendum would have on the Center for Community Agriculture project. The Commissioners agreed it would be helpful to have clarification from the Selectmen on the consequences of a Yes and a No vote.

MOTION MADE BY MR. WEISSBACH, SECONDED BY MR. BERGERON, TO REQUEST THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN PROVIDE CLARIFICATION OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF A “YES” VOTE AND A “NO” VOTE AT THE PLANNED REFERENDUM ON WHETHER OR NOT TO REICND THE TOWN’S ACCEPTANCE OF A STEAP GRANT IN THE AMOUNT \$431,200.00 TO UNDERTAKE THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY AGRICULTURE PROJECT.
UNANIMOUS AYE.

The Commissioners agreed not to take any further action until the referendum results are known.

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

The regular meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

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