

**Joint Meeting of the East Haddam and Haddam  
Economic Development Commissions  
Special Meeting Minutes**

**February 4, 2016**

Attending:

East Haddam EDC: R. Casner; R. Parady; K. Staehly; F. Weissbach

Haddam EDC: S. Bayley; M. Farina; M. Fortuna

Guests: K. Anderson; J. Bergin; A. Blaschik; E. Blaschik; K. Blaschik; E. Bogan; R. Bradway; C. Brownell; J. Comerford; K. DeVeau; K. Dodd; L. Glidden; S. Gold; S. Hanes; R. Haramut; I. Dedusaj; A. Linares; D. Mathiasen; D. McMahon; L. Milardo; J. Muthersbaugh; M. Muthersbaugh; D. Papallo; P. Pinnell; A. Pszczolkowski; C. Pszczolkowski; J. Pugliese; J. Riley; N. Stamler; M. Walter; S. Wheeler; N. Wilson;

1. Call To Order: Mr. Casner called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. He thanked Mr. Dedusaj for donating the space for the meeting.

2. Introductions:

- a. Mr. Fortuna and Mr. Casner, Chairmen of the Haddam and East Haddam EDCs respectively, introduced themselves.
- b. The Commissioners and guests introduced themselves and provided brief comments on their background and experience.

East Haddam's First Selectman Walter thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and noted that he was happy to see that many of the Lower River Valley region's key economic drivers were in attendance. He discussed the beauty of the area and its numerous tourism assets and stated that he believes the Haddams are at the point where they would benefit by professional assistance in pulling together a tourism-based economic development plan.

Haddam's First Selectwoman Milardo also thanked the attendees for their participation and stated that the main limiting factor of economic development in Tylerville is its access to clean water. She stated that the cost to resolve the problem is estimated to be \$3.5M. She reviewed Haddam's efforts to create a village setting in Tylerville and Mr. Fortuna noted that the town's Planning & Zoning Commission is working on village zoning regulations for the area.

3. Meeting Minutes Review/Approval: The review and approval of the minutes of the Special Joint Haddam/East Haddam Meeting of October 14, 2015 and the Regular East Haddam Meeting of December 3, 2015 were tabled.
4. Projects Update:
  - a. East Haddam EDC Chairman Report – Mr. Casner reported that the primary projects the East Haddam EDC has been focused on are the possibility of extending the sewer lines to the Four-Corners area, identifying an alternate access point for the Town Office Site, and soliciting public input regarding the Village revitalization project. He noted that Mr. Nemergut recently submitted plans for an alternate Town Office Site access point to the CT Department of Transportation for their consideration.
  - b. Haddam EDC Chairman Report – Mr. Fortuna reported that Haddam's economic development studies have focused on the themes of tourism, improving its water/sewer infrastructure, and taking advantage of its existing commercial properties. He noted that Haddam was recently awarded a Preservation of Place grant.
5. CT Main Street Center Grant: First Selectwoman Milardo reported that Haddam has received a \$10,000.00 Main Street Center Preservation of Place Grant grant from the state to conduct a market analysis that will help in the drafting of new zoning regulations for the Tylerville section.

6. Tourism Sub-Committee:

- a. Set Meeting Date – The first meeting of the joint Haddam/East Haddam Tourism Sub-Committee was set for February 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m.
- b. Deb Mathiasen – Presentation - Ms. Mathiasen stated she is East Haddam’s representative to the CT Central Region Tourism District. She reviewed recent tourism events East Haddam, including the swingbridge centennial celebration and the 2015 Fall Weekend. She noted that a Spring Weekend, including a Taste of East Haddam, is planned for the weekend of April 30<sup>th</sup>.

7. Open Discussion – Board Members: Mr. Casner described the purpose of the meeting was to discuss economic development options for the Route 82 corridor. He cited the Goodspeed Theatre presence as an anchor business for the area and discussed opportunities to build out a theatre/arts district. Mr. Fortuna noted the synergies between Haddam and East Haddam and reviewed previous economic development cooperation between the towns. He stated that tourism is the main opportunity for both towns.

Mr. Casner noted the need for public input to develop a marketable/saleable plan for the area and stated he would like to open the discussion up to the guests in attendance. He introduced Mr. Gold and Ms. Bogan of the River Council of Governments (COG). Mr. Gold noted that the River COG is a council of 17 towns and is governed by federal and state statutes. He and Ms. Bogan reviewed the COG’s GrowSmart strategy which was a result of a recent regional economic development study funded by a CT Office of Policy and Management grant. Ms. Bogan noted the region’s reliance on the leisure economy and stated that the GrowSmart program’s key recommendations reflect that culture.

Mr. Haramut provided an update on the CT DOT’s planned repairs to the swingbridge and stated that the Department is willing to consider adding a bridge walkway to the project. He noted that, if a walkway is added, the DOT would require the towns to build sidewalks leading up to the bridge.

Mr. Casner introduced Senator Linares who stated that he feels the Lower River Valley is the “Napa Valley” of the east coast and discussed his support of sewer/water infrastructure improvements for Haddam. He noted the need to attract young people to the area and stated that there is a lack of low-maintenance housing options available to that demographic. He also commented on the opportunity to take advantage of digital marketing for the area.

Mr. McMahon stated that the Goodspeed Theatre supports the towns’ efforts to attract additional tourists to the area.

Several of the attendees discussed the need for more hotel rooms in the area to extend tourism visits and also to attract corporate events. Mr. Dodd discussed the planned expansion of the Essex Steamtrain excursions and noted the need for additional restaurants in the Tylerville/East Haddam Village area. Mr. Hanes noted the potential for recreational boating to be an economic driver and there was a brief discussion about East Haddam’s recently installed public dock.

Mr. Muthersbugh stated that visitors traveling to the area by train need access to Zip cars at the Saybrook train station and Mr. Linares discussed his efforts to allow Uber cabs in CT. The attendees discussed the potential for a water-taxi and/or trolley to transport people across the river. There was a general discussion regarding the walkability of Tylerville.

Mr. Pinnell stated that there is an opportunity to attract light industrial business to the area by re-vitalizing old mills to generate energy. Mr. Farina recommended the need for continued efforts to educate the public about tourism attractions in the area.

Mr. Pugliese, of the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce, stressed the value of the area and stated that he was impressed by the turnout for the meeting. He noted that the Chamber has a Haddam/East Haddam division and asked that they be kept in the loop regarding the towns’ Route 82 corridor development efforts. Ms. Bogan noted the success of Pearls & Plaid, a retail store in East Haddam, and stated that the building it is housed in is up for sale. She said the owner wants to remain in East Haddam and Mr. Casner confirmed that East Haddam’s EDC will work with her to find a suitable relocation space.

Mr. Fortuna advised that the EDCs have identified five sub-committees they would like to establish to continue work on the Route 82 corridor project: (1) Tourism, (2) Infrastructure, (3) Planning, (4) Grants & Funding, and (5) Communications. He and Mr. Casner solicited volunteers for the sub-committees and noted the membership was open to the public. Mr. Weissbach suggested an additional sub-committee that would identify the obstacles to moving forward and develop potential solutions to the problems.

8. Public Comment: The public comments were made during the Open Discussion portion of the meeting and are reported on above, under that agenda item.
9. Next Steps/Next Meeting Date: Mr. Casner stated that the next steps are to populate the sub-committees and to continue to move forward on the projects reported on by the EDC Chairmen earlier in the meeting. He stated the joint EDC meetings will continue on a quarterly basis and the next meeting will be in May.
10. Adjournment: There being no additional discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

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