

**East Haddam Economic Development Commission**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**May 2, 2019**

Attending: J. Albuquerque; R. Casner; J. Fennema; I. Haines; R. Parady; M. Robidoux  
Absent: D. Bergeron

Guests: M. Callahan; E. Lyman; B. Shaw; J. Shaw; S. Wheeler

1. Call to Order - Mr. Casner called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
2. Attendance – Mr. Casner sat Mr. Robidoux for Mr. Bergeron.
3. Approval of Minutes

**Regular Meeting – April 4, 2019**

The Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 4, 2019 and Mr. Casner noted one revision.

MOTION MADE BY MR. FENNEMA, SECONDED BY MS. HAINES, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF APRIL 4, 2019 AS AMENDED. UNANIMOUS AYE.

4. Old Business

A. Status Reports

1. EDC Chairman Update

- a. Goodspeed Landing – Mr. Casner reported that the RFQs had been sent out to all the parties that had requested one and attended the mandatory walk-through of the property. In response to a question from Mr. Casner, Mr. Lyman confirmed that there would not be a second walk-through scheduled.
- b. Building Department – Fee Schedule – Mr. Casner reported that he had met with the new Building Inspector and they discussed the department’s current fee schedule. He advised that Mr. Thody informed him that the Board of Selectmen, not his department, sets the fees. Mr. Casner further stated that he has had an opportunity to work with Mr. Thody and he was very prompt in scheduling inspections, knowledgeable and fair.

Mr. Casner recognized Mr. Benjamin Shaw who introduced himself and stated he is a building contractor in East Haddam. Mr. Shaw agreed that Mr. Thody was a good choice for the Town’s Building Official. He stated, however, that he also feels that the Town’s building fee schedule, adopted on October 1, 2018, is excessive and not in-line with what surrounding towns are charging.

Mr. Shaw advised that he had contacted numerous municipal Building Departments and did a comparative study of the building fee he would have paid in 18 surrounding towns relative to the fee he paid in East Haddam for the same project. He noted that East Haddam’s fee was between 45% and 200% higher than what the other towns’ fees would have been.

Mr. Shaw distributed materials related to his research, as well as a copy of an appeal letter he had sent to East Haddam's Board of Selectmen and Economic Development Commission regarding the Town's Building fee schedule. Mr. Shaw stated that East Haddam is the only town that sets a minimum square foot cost for various aspects of construction rather than relying on the estimated cost of construction determined by the contractor.

Mr. Shaw responded to several questions from the Commissioners and there was a general discussion regarding Mr. Shaw's findings. The group also discussed the potential impact of the Town's building fee schedule on setting property values for tax assessment purposes. Mr. Lyman confirmed that he has a copy of Mr. Shaw's research and that he is looking into the issue.

**MOTION MADE BY MR. ROBIDOUX, SECONDED BY MS. HAINES, AUTHORIZING THE BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EAST HADDAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN RECOMMENDING THE SELECTMEN RESEARCH THE REASONABLENESS OF TOWN'S CURRENT BUILDING FEE STRUCTURE. UNANIMOUS AYE.**

The Commissioners agreed to continue to review Mr. Shaw's findings and conduct any additional research they feel is necessary.

## 2. First Selectman Update

- a. Transfer Station – Mr. Lyman reported that the hopper's ram had failed and a new replacement would cost \$60-70,000.00. He advised that a temporary solution has been developed but a permanent fix will take several months. In the meantime, he advised that he has instructed the Public Works Department to postpone the planned reversal of traffic flow at the Transfer Station set to begin on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Lyman responded to several questions from the Commissioners and confirmed that he still supports the bag system for the Transfer Station.

3. Economic Development Administrator Report – Mr. Casner reported that Ms. Smith had submitted her resignation because she and her husband have relocated to Oregon. The Commissioners all agreed that Ms. Smith had been a valuable asset to the Town and will be missed.
  - a. Farm Tax Abatement Program – Mr. Lyman reported that he had spoken with the Tax Assessor who informed him that, if the Farm Tax Abatement Program is implemented, the maximum impact on the Town's tax revenues would be approximately \$13,000.00 annually. He and the Commissioners agreed it would be worthwhile to continue to pursue implementation of the CT Farm Tax Abatement Program.

**MOTION MADE BY MS. HAINES, SECONDED BY MR. PARADY, TO SEND A LETTER TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN RECOMMENDING THEY INVESTIGATE THE FEASIBILITY OF ADOPTING THE FARM TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAM. UNANIMOUS AYE.**

- b. Tax Incentive Program – Mr. Casner reported that he had reviewed the Town's Tax Incentive Program. He stated that he feels the incentives for the low and high range business projects is appropriate; however, he believes the incentive for mid-range projects (between \$500,000.00 and \$3M) could be improved. He said that Deep River seems to have a very solid program but noted that municipal programs are limited by state statute. Mr. Casner agreed to continue to investigate the tax incentive programs offered by the surrounding towns and will report his recommendations to the Commissioners at their next regular meeting.

4. Tourism Committee – Celebrate East Haddam Review – Mr. Robidoux reported that, despite the weather, there was a good turnout at this year’s Celebrate East Haddam’s event. He noted that having a shuttle bus from the two off-site parking locations seemed to help. Mr. Robidoux stated that the East Haddam Business Association is happy for EDC’s continued support of the event.
  5. EDC/PZC Sub-Committee – New Business District on Lower Town Street (Rt. 82) – Mr. Casner advised that two Planning & Zoning Commissioners have volunteered to participate on the sub-committee. The EDC volunteers discussed potential meeting dates and agreed the third Wednesday of each month worked for them. Mr. Casner agreed to schedule the initial organizational meeting for the for May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:30 p.m. and will notify the P&Z volunteers.
- B. Proposed expansion of the industrial area in the IG zone – Mr. Casner reported that a public hearing for Shagbark’s building expansion is on the Planning & Zoning Commission’s agenda for May 7th. He encouraged the Commissioners to attend and speak in support of the plan.
- C. Chatham Health Oversight Review Committee – Mr. Fennema reported that Chatham Health’s new Director of Health, Russell Melmed, is on-board and appears to be a good addition. He noted that Mr. Melmed advised him that he will attend a future EDC meeting. It was also noted that Mr. Mitchell is now East Haddam’s Town Sanitarian and has regular office hours in the Municipal Office Building. Ms. Haines agreed to draft a letter confirming EDC’s invitation for its June meeting to Director Melmed and also include Don Mitchell.

Mr. Casner noted that feedback from local businesses is that the service provided by the Chatham Health District has improved.

- D. Plan of Conservation & Development – Mr. Casner reported that he had reviewed the Town’s draft Plan of Conservation and Development and that most of EDC’s requests have been incorporated. However, he feels that some of the narrative and pictures in the Economic Development section focus too heavily on negative aspects of the commercial districts. He stated that he will submit several pictures of successful commercial property renovations and request they also be included in the Plan.

Mr. Casner reported that the Planning and Zoning Commissioners had moved to strike language recommending extension of the sewer system from the Village to the Four-Corners area from the Plan’s Economic Development section. He noted that, although there were no infrastructure grants available when EDC previously researched the project, if the language is removed from the new Plan of Conservation and Development, it would effectively shut-down the Town’s ability to apply for future grants that may become available for such infrastructure improvements.

**MOTION MADE BY MR. ROBIDOUX, SECONDED BY MR. PARADY, TO SEND A LETTER TO THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDING THE NEW PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT INCLUDE LANGUAGE SUPPORTING THE EXPANSION OF THE TOWN’S SEWER LINES. UNANIMOUS AYE.**

- E. Business of the Month – June 2019 Nominations and Vote – Ms. Haines made several suggestions for June’s Business of the Month and the Commissioners discussed her recommendations.

**MOTION MADE BY MR. PARADY, SECONDED BY MR. FENNEMA, TO NAME FOX HOPYARD AS EDC’S JUNE 2019 BUSINESS OF THE MONTH. UNANIMOUS AYE.**

- F. Vision/Mission Statement – Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

5. New Business

A. Economic Development Coordinator Position – Mr. Casner reiterated that Ms. Smith had resigned as the Town’s Economic Development Coordinator.

- a. Thank You Letter to Suzan Smith – Mr. Casner agreed to draft a thank you letter to Ms. Smith for all her contributions. It was agreed that all of the Commissioners would sign the letter.
- b. Applications – Mr. Casner advised that the position of Economic Development Coordinator will be posted.

6. Public Comment – In response to a recommendation from Mr. Callahan that the EDC develop interest-focused tourism marketing campaigns, Mr. Casner advised that he is participating in a 5-town economic development committee, representing the Lower River Valley, that is concentrating on tourism related issues. He noted that the over-riding problem is that there is not sufficient lodging available to accommodate longer than day-trip tourists. There was a general discussion regarding tourism and how to build on the available potential.

7. Adjournment

THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL BUSINESS TO DISCUSS, A MOTION WAS MADE BY MS. HAINES, SECONDED BY MR. FENNEMA, TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MEETING. UNANIMOUS AYE.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Recorded

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sharon Wheeler