

**Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 7, 2011**

Attending: J. Albuquerque; R. Casner (joined the meeting at 8:45 p.m.); M. Gionta; D. Mathiasen; E. Odell, R. Parady; P. Rubenbauer; P. Stricker, M. Ziobron (EDC Coordinator)

Absent: J. Rucker

Guests: None

Ms. Stricker called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and sat Ms. Rubenbauer for Mr. Casner and Mr. Parady for Mr. Rucker.

MR. ODELL MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. STRICKER, TO APPROVE THE MARCH 3, 2011 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. MR. ALBUQUERQUE ABSTAINED FROM THE VOTE AND THE MOTION PASSED WITH A MAJORITY OF AYES.

MR. ALBUQUERQUE MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. STRICKER, TO APPROVE THE MARCH 10, 2011 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN. MR. ALBUQUERQUE ABSTAINED FROM THE VOTE AND THE MOTION PASSED WITH A MAJORITY OF AYES.

OLD BUSINESS

Status Reports:

Goodspeed Properties – Ms. Stricker reported that the Commissioners participated in a walk-through of the new actors' houses on Creamery road earlier that evening and that the Goodspeed is expecting the Certificates of Occupancy for those properties this week. She stated that the house on Ray Hill Road is next on their schedule for completion, followed by the houses on the Village crescent.

Economic Development Coordinator – Ms. Ziobron distributed a copy of her report which is included as an attachment to these minutes. She noted that the Commercial Properties website does not include properties that are vacant but not currently listed for sale. She noted that the Corner Restaurant has closed and the building is for sale.

There was a general discussion concerning the Planning and Zoning Commission's public hearings regarding the East Haddam Brewery project. Ms. Ziobron encouraged the Commissioners to attend the next public hearing for this project or to submit a brief letter of support. She also reported on recent developments concerning the Brewery's access to a water source.

Ms. Ziobron provided additional information on the Vacant Commercial Properties listed in her report, including a review of the problems with the Grandview Campground construction project and an update on work at the Shadybrook Campgrounds. She stated that the buildings in Johnsonville are continuing to deteriorate and reported that she has had discussions with several interested developers; however, the owner has been unresponsive to offers to purchase the property. Mr. Parady volunteered to work with her as point-person on this property. She stated that Patch.com is doing a story on Johnsonville.

There was a general discussion concerning potential future uses and obstacles to the re-use of the several properties. Ms. Ziobron and Ms. Stricker reported on their meeting with P&Z Commissioners to review the Town's vacant commercial properties and discuss a program to pro-actively manage/market them. In response to a question from Mr. Albuquerque, Ms. Ziobron provided additional information on the work at Shadybrook.

Ms. Ziobron reviewed the Other items in her report.

Ms. Ziobron advised that Fuss & O'Neil has done a Phase I study on the old Sunrise Resort which is significantly more extensive than the an electrical/mechanical infrastructure study the Town had expected. Ms. Stricker reported that the State received the report in December but has still not issued an RFQ for the property. She reiterated, therefore, that it is in the Town's best interest to send a letter to the CT DEP to push them toward taking some action. She encouraged the Commissioners to review the draft letter that is in their meeting packets and provide Ms. Ziobron with any comments or suggested revisions. It was noted that a memo would also be sent to the Town's Emergency Management Director requesting he contact the State Fire Marshal and recommend a thorough review of safety issue at the site be done.

Ms. Ziobron reviewed her upcoming vacation dates.

Signage Ordinance – There was no update on this item

East Haddam Village Revitalization Commission & Haddam Land Swap – Mr. Gionta reported that at the Commission met and agreed to post a RFQ for developers. He stated he is updating the list of potential developers and the EDC Commissioners provided him with several names to add to his list.

MR. GIONTA MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. ODELL, TO HIRE MS. WHEELER TO REVIEW THE DRAFT REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS DOCUMENT FOR THE EAST HADDAM VILLAGE REVITALIZATION PROJECT. UNANIMOUS AYE.

Mr. Odell reported that Senator Daily's assistant, Mr. Rocco, and First Selectman Walter have all advised him that the Goodspeed is not a part of the Haddam Land Swap proposal even though the language in the Bill still lists them as such. He stated that all parties have stated that language will be coming out of the Bill. Ms. Mathiasen stated, for the record, that EDC's position on the Land Swap deal will remain neutral until they have more information. All agreed that, at this point, the proposal is a land issue and not an EDC issue.

East Haddam Business Association – Ms. Mathiasen reported that the Business Expo was a success and that the potential for the Association to include a float in the Town's Memorial Day Parade will be discussed at their next regular meeting. Ms. Mathiasen noted that HTNP.Com had done a nice article on the Business Association which included interviews with several of the member businesses.

Vacant Properties Options – Sub-Committee Report – This item was discussed earlier in the meeting and is reported on above under the EDC Coordinator's report.

Moodus Commercial Infrastructure – Ms. Stricker reviewed a draft letter to the Board of Selectmen recommending eliminating the Plains Road Extension in Moodus and replace it with green space to improve safety and make the area more attractive. She noted that she and Mr. Casner will meet with a representative from the Town's Department of Transportation on April 11th to discuss the recommendation.

MR. ODELL MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. MATHIASEN, TO SEND A LETTER TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN RECOMMENDING CLOSING OFF THE PLAINS ROAD EXTENSION IN MOODUS AND REPLACING THE PAVED AREA WITH GREEN SPACE. UNANIMOUS AYE.

Goodspeed 2nd Theatre – Mr. Odell reported that he had met with Mr. Price and Ms. Kittner who agreed that this item can be removed from EDC's agenda at this time. He advised that they also discussed the installation of the crosswalks as part of the Village Revitalization project.

Sunrise - This item was discussed earlier in the meeting and is reported on above under the EDC Coordinator's report.

Other Businesses Updates/New Businesses/Events/Tourism:

- Chowder Cookoff – Ms. Mathiasen distributed a financial report for the event and reported that there was a profit of \$1,146.00 to disburse. There was a general discussion regarding potential recipients.

MR. GIONTA MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. ODELL, TO DISTRIBUTE THE PROCEEDS AS FOLLOWS: \$100.00 TO THE EAST HADDAM SPORTSMEN'S CLUB, \$246.00 TO THE EAST HADDAM FOOD BANK, \$200.00 TO MUSIC ON THE RIVER, \$200.00 TO FRIENDS OF GILLETTE CASTLE, \$200.00 TO RANDY HOLMGREN'S EAGLE SCOUT WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT, AND \$200.00 TO THE EAST HADDAM FUEL BANK. UNANIMOUS AYE.

Mr. Odell volunteered to help Ms. Mathiasen with the thank you notes for the event. Ms. Mathiasen, Ms. Stricker, and Ms. Ziobron will participate in a wrap-up meeting with Jackie Cacace of LaVita in May.

- Village Signage / Brochure Display Options – Ms. Rubenbauer reported that she had researched a number of signage companies and was not able to find a local company that offers signs with a display box. She found a company in East Hartford and she reviewed her findings with the Commissioners. In response to a question from Ms. Ziobron, Ms. Rubenbauer stated she would inquire about quantity discounts.

MR. GIONTA MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. MATHIASEN, TO PURCHASE TWO OF THE SIGN/BROCHURE DISPLAYS FROM YUSH SIGN & DISPLAY CO., INC., FOR A MAXIMUM COST OF \$244.00 FOR BOTH. UNANIMOUS AYE.

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Rubenbauer for her efforts on researching the sign and brochure display boxes.

- On-Line Listing of Commercial Properties - This item was discussed earlier in the meeting and is reported on above under the EDC Coordinator's report.

Mr. Casner joined the meeting at 8:45 p.m. and reported on the discussions with Senator Daily about the land-swap Bill at the East Haddam Democratic Committee meeting earlier in the evening. He reported that the Senator's information was very limited but she had provided a copy of the updated Bill which did not include the Goodspeed's participation. He noted that just about everyone at the meeting was opposed to the Bill mainly due to lack of information on the plan. In response to a question from Mr. Odell, he stated that Sen. Daily's response to the feedback was that the property needs to be transferred so that the property owners could be the driving force to move the project forward.

In response to questions, Mr. Casner advised that there were a few Haddam, Chester, and Deep River residents in attendance but that there were no representatives from the Riverhouse. He confirmed that there were also several reporters at the meeting. He noted that several attendees commented on the fact that there has never before been a land-swap involving Open Space property. He stated that Sen. Daily commented that such transfers are not without precedent and a request was made for her to provide the Democratic Town Committee with a list of other similar transfers.

Mr. Casner reported that Sen. Daily stated that they are working on the conservation easements and other restrictions that might be put on the property and that they would be between the Riverhouse partners the CT DEP. She denied that there is any "gag order" on DEP to talk about the deal.

Mr. Casner also reported that Mr. Johnson spoke at the meeting and stated that had this proposal occurred before he sold two properties to the State for Open Space use, he would have had strong reservations about going forward with those sales. He stated that the First Selectmen from Haddam, East Haddam, and Chester have submitted letters in support of the proposal. Mr. Odell noted that the First Selectman of Essex does not support the project.

Ms. Stricker noted that it was understood from EDC's conversation with First Selectman Walter that his letter was to support regional tourism but not a specific project. Mr. Odell thanked Mr. Caser for representing EDC at the meeting.

- Other – Tourism Region Letters - Ms. Mathiasen reported that she had circulated her letter of support for the Regional Tourism District funding that was sent to state legislators to the Town's tourism businesses. Several had expressed an interest in the issue and may also send letters of support. After some discussion, it was decided that Ms. Mathiasen's letter, as East Haddam Tourism rep, also represented the EDC view on the subject and it was not necessary to prepare another letter from EDC. She stated that it is hard to predict which way the decision will go at the State level and will likely come down to last minute Appropriations committee discussions.

NEW BUSINESS

EDC Ordinance – Goals Rewrite Suggestions – Ms. Mathiasen advised that this is a placeholder item on the agenda. She noted that the existing write-up of EDC goals is very vague and need to be rewritten.

Board of Education Ad Hoc Committee Representation – Ms. Mathiasen reported that the Board of Education is reviewing its local purchasing ordinance for the schools and that she will represent EDC and the business community at those meetings.

EDC Chair Nominations/Vote – MS. MATHIASEN MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. GIONTA, TO NOMINATE ED ODELL AS CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION. UNANIMOUS AYE.

Mail received – Ms. Mathiasen reported that she had received a notice that the Planning & Zoning Commission had approved the plans for the dog park at the old baseball park at the Town Beach.

Public Comment/Other – There was no public comment at the meeting.

MS. STRICKER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. ALBUQUERQUE, TO ENTER INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 9:20 PM FOR PURPOSES OF DISCUSSING THE MOODUS INFRASTRUCTURE. UNANIMOUS AYE

Ms. Ziobron was invited into the executive session.

MS. MATHIASSEN MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. PARADY TO CONCLUDE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 9:40 P.M. UNANIMOUS AYE.

The action taken in the Executive Session was an agreement to send a letter to Board of Selectmen regarding septic issues and the Moodus infrastructure.

The meeting reconvened at 9:40 pm

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon R. Wheeler
Recording Secretary