

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 1, 2012

Attending: J. Albuquerque (arrived 7:41 p.m.); R. Casner; D. Mathiasen; E. Odell; P. Rubenbauer; G. Rucker; P. Simmons (Economic Development Coordinator); F. Weissbach
Absent: R. Parady
Guests: B. Highman; M. Thiede

Mr. Odell called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. Mr. Weissbach was seated for Ms. Stricker

Minutes – The Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the February 2, 2012 meeting. MR. CASNER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. WEISSBACH TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS WRITTEN. UNANIMOUS AYE.

Mr. Odell introduced Mr. Thiede and asked him to update the Commissioners on his plan to open a coffee house in the Village. Mr. Thiede thanked the Commissioners for their support and introduced Ms. Highman. He advised that Ms. Highman is a certified pastry chef and has agreed to join him as an operations partner in his new business. He distributed a document that outlined his working plan and reviewed several points in the plan. He and the Commissioners discussed challenges he must address concerning his acquisition of the property and acquiring CT Department of Health's sign-off on the water supply. The Commissioners encouraged Mr. Thiede to initiate the process with DPH as soon as possible.

OLD BUSINESS

Status Reports:

Economic Development Coordinator – Mr. Simmons reviewed several points in his March 1st report, a copy of which is attached to and made part of these minutes. Mr. Odell stated that he and Mr. Simmons had also discussed the opportunity to raise the level of EDC's communication with the public through the use of technology.

In response to a question from Mr. Casner regarding the status of the Brownell property, Mr. Odell advised that he and Mr. Simmons had met with Brownell's owner and potential purchaser and things are progressing well.

East Haddam Village Revitalization Commission – Mr. Odell had no update on this agenda item.

First Selectman Update – The First Selectman was not in attendance at the meeting and there was no update on this agenda item.

East Haddam Business Association – Ms. Mathiasen reported that six businesses have signed up for the Business Association's Business Expo that will be held during the Chowder Cook-Off. She solicited the Commissioners help in promoting attendance at the Business Association's March 21st meeting. She advised that Mr. Dan Raucci will be the guest speaker and his topic will be how to build sales.

Moodus Commercial Infrastructure – Mr. Casner displayed a drawing of a new plan for the enlargement of the green space on Plains Road that he had gotten from the Land Use Administrator. He stated that he does not feel that the new plan accomplishes the original goal that was set for the project and recommended that EDC and the Town should continue discussions with the owner of the apartment buildings concerning moving the parking area to the rear of the buildings. In response to a question from Ms. Rubenbauer, Mr. Casner advised that the State DOT supports the beautification plan provided the owners of the abutting properties agree to it.

Sunrise – This item was covered during the Economic Development Coordinator's report. Mr. Simmons confirmed that he will follow-up with the DEEP after their March 16th deadline for responses to the RFQ.

Agriculture/Farmers' Market – Recommendations & Sub-Committee

Ms. Rubenbauer advised that the scheduled meeting of the sub-committee had been cancelled due to bad weather. She reported that Mr. Savitsky had submitted a proposal for a new location for the Farmers' Market and he will be invited to the next meeting to exchange ideas.

Destination Marketing Sub-Committee

Ms. Mathiasen reported that there was no update on this agenda item. She advised that she will reach out to the Historic District and Conservations Commissions to collaborate on creating a walking tour for East Haddam.

Other Businesses Updates/New Businesses/Events/Tourism:

Chowder Cookoff – Ms. Mathiasen reported that the signs for the event have been completed and that the mugs have been ordered. Mr. Odell advised that the deadline for submitting the Chatham Health District applications has been extended to March 7th. Mr. Simmons reviewed the list of potential participants. The Commissioners discussed assignments for the event.

State Tourism Marketing – Research, Branding & Grants

Ms. Mathiasen reported that she and Ms. Carle had attended a State conference on “What’s New” regarding tourism. She advised that the State has budgeted \$15M to the tourism budget line for each of the next two years and have hired a marketing agency to come-up with a brand-identify for CT and develop a national media strategy. She stated that the State has also hired a marketing research firm which is conducting surveys and focus groups. The Commissioners reviewed the feedback received from the surveys and focus groups.

Ms. Mathiasen stated that the State offers matching grants available for local arts and culture organizations; however, the minimum amount granted is \$3,000.00 which is more than most of the small groups can afford to match. She noted that Ms. Carle made that point at the meeting and the State may consider smaller grants.

NEW BUSINESS

Events Magazine – Content for EDC/Coordinator Article – The Commissioners agreed that the article for the next Events Magazine should focus on introducing Mr. Simmons.

Use of Tax Incentive Program – This agenda item was not discussed at the meeting

EDC Ordinance – This agenda item was not discussed at the meeting.

Mail Received – Ms. Mathiasen advised that, in response to an invitation from the Planning & Zoning Commission, she, Mr. Simmons, and Mr. Casner attended a meeting to discuss updates to the Plan of Conservation and Development. She distributed copies of an EDC proposal that was submitted to the P&Z Commissioners and noted that they were receptive to the suggestions.

Mr. Odell reported that Ms. Stricker had submitted a letter of resignation from the Economic Development Commission which he regrettfully accepted. He noted that she will continue to assist with the Chowder Cook-Off event.

Public Comment/Other – There was no public comment at the meeting. Ms. Rubenbauer noted that the arrow on the Franklin Academy sign on the Route 82/151 directory was pointing in the wrong direction. She volunteered to do an inventory of the directory signs.

Mr. Albuquerque advised that the Open Space Committee is considering two new properties for acquisition.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon R. Wheeler
Recording Secretary