

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
September 6, 2012

Attending: R. Casner; D. Mathiasen; E. Odell; R. Parady; P. Rubenbauer; G. Rucker; P. Simmons (Economic Development Coordinator); F. Weissbach
Absent: J. Albuquerque
Guests: B. Buongiorno

Mr. Odell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes – The Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the regular meeting of July 12, 2012 and the special meeting of August 1, 2012. A minor typo was noted on each. MR. CASNER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. RUBENBAUER TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED. UNANIMOUS AYE.

Guest – Mr. Odell introduced Ms. Buongiorno of Ray of Light Farm and invited her to address the Commissioners. Ms. Buongiorno thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to speak with them and provided some background on how the Ray of Light Farm came into being and described the current challenges it is facing regarding the status of the property. Mr. Parady noted that the Farm is one of the Town's larger employers and regularly patronizes local businesses.

In response to a question from Mr. Rucker, Ms. Buongiorno stated that the Farm does offer a special-needs program; however, she does not anticipate it exceeding 20% of all of the programs. In response to questions from Mr. Weissbach, she advised that Ray-of-Light Farm currently employs 18 people, that there is a risk they may lose the property, and confirmed that she is training someone to take over the management of the Farm.

Mr. Odell stated he would like to form a sub-committee to research how EDC might be able to assist Ms. Buongiorno and Mr. Rucker and Mr. Weissbach volunteered to be on that committee.

OLD BUSINESS

Status Reports:

Economic Development Coordinator – Mr. Simmons reviewed several points in his report, a copy of which is attached to and made part of these minutes. He responded to several questions about the status of the Sunrise Resort and there was a general discussion about the need for the State to clean-up the property.

Ms. Mathiasen noted that the fact sheet that Mr. Simmons prepared for the tax incentive program is very helpful and has been posted on Coordinator portion of the municipal website.

First Selectman Update – Mr. Walter was not in attendance; however, Ms. Mathiasen reported that National Geographic is filming a reality episode at Johnsonville that will air this month. She noted that several local residents that are familiar with the reality show are concerned that the show might create a negative perception of East Haddam.

East Haddam Village Revitalization Commission – There was no update on this agenda item.

Commercial Infrastructure (Moodus and Norwich Rd.) – Mr. Casner and Mr. Simmons reported that the analysis phase of this project is complete. Mr. Casner feels that there is not enough demand to pursue the project; however, he recommended the Town request the existing sewer line be extended when the State is working on the Succor Brook bridge to allow the line to be run up to the Town Street business district if demand increases at some future point.

The Commissioners agreed this agenda item can be tabled.

East Haddam Business Association – Ms. Mathiasen reported that the Business Association is planning a tag sale for October 27th.

Farmers' Market Sub-Committee – Ms. Rubenbauer reported that the activity at the Farmers' Market has quieted down since school went back into session. Ms. Mathiasen advised that the Sub-Committee is planning a Kids' Day at the Market on September 26th.

There was a general discussion regarding the level of local participation in the Farmers' Market. The Commissioners agreed that the Sub-Committee should hold a post-mortem after the season closes to review what went well and what could be improved. Mr. Weissbach offered to draft a letter to some of the local businesses to encourage their participation

next season.

Swing Bridge 100th Anniversary Planning Sub-Committee

Ms. Mathiasen reported that the State will be doing repairs on the two Succor Brook Route 82 bridges near Ray Hill Road during the time of the Swing Bridge Anniversary which could have an impact on whether or not they can hold a parade. Ms. Rubenbauer reported that she had forwarded a CT Department of Transportation project engineer the information she had on putting lights on the Swingbridge and is waiting his feedback.

Other Businesses Updates/New Businesses/Events/Tourism:

Request for Use Zone Change – P&Z Public Hearing set for Sept. 25 – Mr. Casner clarified the type of rezoning under consideration by P&Z and reported that he believes they are in favor of the change. He further noted that the owner of the property abutting the planned coffee-house property has sent P&Z a letter supporting the zone change.

There was a general discussion about whether or not any Commissioners should attend the Public Hearing and Mr. Simmons stated that he plans on attending. Ms. Mathiasen stated she would make the Business Association aware of the meeting in case any business owners want to attend or send a letter in support of the change.

Summer Tourism Wrap-Up – Ms. Mathiasen advised that she has gotten positive feedback on the new brochures. She also noted that the East Haddam Stage Company's performances at Gillette Castle State Park went well.

Mr. Weissbach noted that he is very impressed with the Music-on-the-River events and suggested EDC reach out to the Parks & Recreation Commission to see if there is any interest in collaborating on an expansion of the program.

NEW BUSINESS

Request for EDC's Help & Partnership for Gillette Castle Performance Art Grant – Ms. Mathiasen reported that the East Haddam Stage Company is applying for a grant from the CT Office of the Arts and a requirement of the grant is that the organization have community partnerships. She noted that Ms. Carle, the group's artistic director, has reached out to her to see if EDC would be willing to act as a community partner and also to request help with completing the grant application. Ms. Mathiasen explained that EDC's partnership role would be to express support of the artistic enrichment the theatre group brings to the community through their summer performances at Gillette Castle State Park. She stated that a second aspect of the partnership would be for EDC and Peter Simmons to assist Ms. Carle with writing the grant.

The Commissioners agreed EDC should support Ms. Carle's efforts and Mr. Simmons agreed to assist her with the technical aspects of writing the grant.

Discussion of Directory Signs, Maintenance & Historic District Recommendations - Ms. Mathiasen asked the Commissioners to consider whether there is still a need for the directory signs. The Commissioners agreed to inspect the signs and discuss at their next meeting whether or not they continue to provide value to the community.

Mr. Casner noted that the "Welcome to Moodus" sign at the Moodus Green is deteriorating. MR. CASNER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. RUBENBAUER, TO RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN THAT THE "WELCOME TO MOODUS" SIGN BE REPLACED WITH A NEW SIGN. UNANIMOUS AYE.

Renew EDC Member Term – Mr. Odell noted that Mr. Albuquerque's term has expired as of June 2012 and he will contact him to see if he would like to have it renewed.

EDC Ordinance – Goals Rewrite Suggestions – There was no update on this agenda item.

Mail Received – There was no mail discussed at the meeting.

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

THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS TO DISCUSS, MR. CASNER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. RUBENBAUER, TO ADJOURN TO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 8.28 P.M. TO DISCUSS COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OPTIONS. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MR. CASNER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. RUBENBAUER, TO INCLUDE THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR IN THE EXECUTIVE SESSION DISCUSSIONS. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MR. WEISSBACH MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. RUCKER, TO ADJOURN THE EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 8:50 P.M. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. No decisions or votes were taken.

THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL BUSINESS TO DISCUSS, MR. WEISSBACH MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. RUCKER, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

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