

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2013

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

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

Minutes – The Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the regular meeting of January 10, 2013. MR. WEISSBACH MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MS. MATHIASEN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS WRITTEN. MR. CASNER ABSTAINED FROM THE VOTE AND THE MOTION PASSED WITH A MAJORITY OF AYES.

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 also noted that he has assisted several business owners with refinancing and expansion financing.

First Selectman Update – Mr. Walter distributed a handout outlining the impact of Gov. Malloy’s proposed budget on the Town’s municipal aid. He noted that while there is a potential net increase in municipal aid of \$26,882.00 in FY 2014 and \$35,941.00 in FY 2015, he is concerned about the Governor’s proposal to exempt the first \$20,000.00 of a vehicle’s value from property tax. Mr. Walter advised that would have an approximately \$1.5M negative impact on the Town’s revenue.

Mr. Walter also reported on the following items:

- The Town received a \$45,000.00 grant from the State to install floating docks at end of the Goodspeed parking lot. He noted that the Town has an easement on the property; however, he must secure a letter from the Goodspeed Board of Directors authorizing the Town to install the docks.
- The State has started to demolish the buildings on the Sunrise Resort. In response to a question from Mr. Weissbach, Mr. Walter advised that the State does not plan to issue any more RFQ’s but will consider any proposals the Town brings to its attention.
- Selectman Lyman has agreed to draft a charge for the Farmers’ Market Committee and will assist in getting the committee established. There was a general discussion regarding the make-up of the committee.

East Haddam Business Association – Ms. Mathiasen reported that the Business Association will host a Business Expo at the Chowder Cook-off and an old-time children’s carnival at the Swing Bridge Centennial Celebration.

Farmers’ Market Sub-Committee – This agenda item was discussed earlier in the meeting and is reported on above in these minutes under First Selectman Update.

Swing Bridge 100th Anniversary Planning Sub-Committee - Ms. Mathiasen reported that there was a good turnout at the last meeting. She also reported the following:

- Monthly meetings for interested event planners are scheduled;
- The Town of Haddam and a number of Haddam businesses are involved in the planning;
- A letter was sent to Gov. Malloy inviting him to the Swing Bridge Centennial;
- The Towns of East Haddam and Haddam groups will share the cost of bunting for the bridge;
- Goodspeed is making plans for a season-long 50th Anniversary celebration and will coordinate some events with the Swing Bridge Centennial;
- EDC will publish an electronic and printed schedule of events;
- The original dedication program was scanned and will be available to replicate for the event.

Ray of Light Farm Future Planning Sub-Committee – There was no update on this agenda item.

Other Businesses Updates/New Businesses/Events/Tourism:

Chowder Cook-Off Planning – Ms. Mathiasen reported that the Chowder Cook-Off will be held on March 23rd. Mr. Simmons reported that there will be 8 participants this year. There was a general discussion about locating half of the participants on the front porch of the Gelston House. Mr. Weissbach agreed to discuss this with Iso Dedusaj. Mr. Parady suggested an alternative location for the event would be on the lawn outside of the Riverhouse overlooking the River. The Commissioners agreed to revisit his suggestion next year. There was a general discussion regarding inviting businesses from outside of East Haddam to participate; however, it was agreed that there were enough East Haddam entries this year.

Ms. Mathiasen confirmed that there would be no change in the donations and prize format of the event and noted that local artists will be submitting designs for the mugs. Mr. Odell and Ms. Rubenbauer volunteered to assist her in selecting the mug design. Ms. Mathiasen distributed a task list for the event and several Commissioners volunteered to assist in the set-up and clean-up for the event.

EDC as Non-Profit Sponsor for Humanities Council Grant Funding – Summer Live Theatre at Gillette Castle State Park – Mr. Simmons reiterated the history of this request and advised that the Town would be the applicant for and recipient of the grant and would hire the East Haddam Stage Company for outdoor performances at Gillette Castle State Park next summer. Ms. Mathiasen noted that EDC brochures and ads promoting the Business Directory could be distributed at the performances which would encourage tourism and promote business. Mr. Casner expressed concern that EDC would be soliciting funding for a for-profit business and there was a general discussion regarding his concern.

MS. MATHIASEN MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. WEISSBACH, THAT THE EAST HADDAM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION SPONSOR PERFORMANCES AT GILLETTE CASTLE STATE PARK THIS SUMMER AND RECOMMEND THE BOARD OF SELECTMAN AUTHORIZE THE TOWN TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR A HUMANITIES COUNCIL GRANT FOR THE PROGRAM. THE VOTE WAS 5 AYES AND 2 NAYS AND THE MOTION PASSED BY A MAJORITY OF AYES.

Options for Route 151/82 Directory Sign – Mr. Parady reported that the Town has retained the services of a consultant to develop a cohesive program for all park, informational and directory signs. He advised that he will wait for the consultant's proposal to address the renovations to the business directory sign.

Business Database Update – At Ms. Mathiasen request for volunteers, Mr. Odell and Ms. Rubenbauer agreed to review and assist in updating EDC's tourism database.

EDC Budget Proposal – Mr. Simmons distributed a revised memo outlining two budget requests. Mr. Simmons discussed the need for a fund to hire consultants to support economic development projects. He suggested \$25,000.00 be budgeted for this purpose. He also recommended \$750.00 be budgeted for a CERC Site Finder subscription. There was a general discussion regarding funding to hire consultants and Mr. Walter suggested a reserve Town account similar to the maintenance account instead of making it an EDC budgeted item and the Commissioners discussed that approach.

MR. WEISSBACH MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. CASNER, TO ACCEPT MR. SIMMONS' PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUDGET BY \$25,750.00 FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR. UNANIMOUS AYE.

Ms. Mathiasen reviewed EDC's accomplishments for the previous fiscal year and goals for the upcoming fiscal year. Several edits were discussed and Ms. Mathiasen and Mr. Simmons agreed to finalize the language.

MR. CASNER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. RUCKER, TO SUBMIT THE PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION 2013-14 BUDGET, AS AMENDED, TO THE BOARD OF FINANCE. UNANIMOUS AYE.

NEW BUSINESS

Review Executive Summary Slides – Center for Community Agriculture at Harris Community Farm – Ms. Mathiasen distributed copies of a PowerPoint presentation for the Center for Community Agriculture. This executive summary of about a dozen slides would be used on the Municipal website. Mr. Weissbach suggested that the presentation should highlight the Town's sponsorship of the program more prominently. Mr. Walter described his vision for the program and there was a general discussion about providing appropriate compensation for the coordinator.

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

Mail Received – Mr. Simmons stated there was one piece of correspondence from the CT Lower River Valley Council addressed to Mr. Odell.

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

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