

**Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2013**

Attending: D. Mathiasen; R. Parady; P. Rubenbauer; G. Rucker; P. Simmons (Economic Development Coordinator); F. Weissbach
Absent: J. Albuquerque; R. Casner; E. Odell
Guests: M. Carrol; K. Matthews (P&Z); C. Scherrer

Ms. Mathiasen called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. She sat Mr. Parady in place of Mr. Albuquerque.

Minutes – The Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the regular meeting of December 6, 2012. MS. RUBENBAUER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. RUCKER TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS WRITTEN. UNANIMOUS AYE.

OLD BUSINESS – Farmers’ Market Sub-Committee

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. In response to a question from Mr. Weissbach, Mr. Simmons stated that the \$431,200 STEAP grant for a Community Agriculture Center at the Harris property will be used to build a barn, two high-tunnel greenhouses, a regular greenhouse and a commercial kitchen. He advised that the project should take 18 months to complete. Mr. Walter noted that he hopes the project will stimulate more agriculture business for East Haddam. Mr. Weissbach requested that Ms. Stone and Mr. McKinnon, from the Agriculture Commission, attend one of the upcoming EDC meetings to present their Commission’s vision for the development of agricultural business in East Haddam.

Mr. Simmons also reported that he met with Mr. Feraz, from Brownell, to discuss opportunities for leasing up to 25,000 sf of space on the Brownell property. He noted that he would like to list the space on CERC Site Finder, a State of CT commercial property website. Ms. Mathiasen noted that MP Impressions would also like to lease some space to local crafters and Mr. Simmons agreed to follow-up with her.

In response to a question from the audience, Mr. Simmons advised that DOT work on the Norwich Road bridges is scheduled to begin in July. There was a general discussion about the project and its impact on the Village businesses and residents.

Ms. Mathiasen stated she would distribute Mr. Simmons’ Year End report via e-mail to all of the Commissioners.

First Selectman Update – Mr. Walter advised that the Board of Selectmen would like to establish a Farmers’ Market Committee and distributed a list of proposed responsibilities that Mr. Simmons had drafted for the Committee’s charge. He asked the Commissioners to review the list and advise him of any additional information they think should be included in the Committee charge.

Regarding the Chowder Festival Mr. Walter stated that he feels recruiting participants is challenging because of the requirement that all the chowders be prepared in a commercial kitchen. He also stated that holding the event at a business-neutral location would be more appealing to potential participants.

East Haddam Business Association – Ms. Rubenbauer reported that the Business Association had voted to take over the task of decorating the Village for the Christmas holidays.

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. Ms. Mathiasen recommended that it would be beneficial to have an EDC Commissioner serve on the Farmers’ Market Committee when it is established.

Swing Bridge 100th Anniversary Planning Sub-Committee - Ms. Mathiasen reported that the next meeting of the Sub-Committee will be held on January 23rd. She advised that Mr. Walter has reached out to Haddam’s First Selectman to coordinate planning and he will also issue an invitation to the Governor to speak at the event. At her request, Mr. Simmons agreed to provide her with the name of a contact at CT DOT to work with. Ms. Scherrer and Mr. Carrol indicated that, as Village merchants, they would like to participate in the planning effort. Ms. Mathiasen agreed to forward them the Sub-Committee’s previous meeting minutes and include them on future e-mail distributions.

Ray of Light Farm Future Planning Sub-Committee – There was no update on this agenda item. Mr. Simmons advised that he continues to reach out to Ms. Buongiorne on a regular basis; however, he has not gotten any response to his e-mails.

Other Businesses Updates/New Businesses/Events/Tourism:

Chowder Cook-Off Planning – The Commissioners recognized that the event draws a substantial crowd to the Village but noted that there is an on-going challenge to attract participants for the Chowder Cook-Off. They discussed timing and the location of the event. Several of the Commissioners and Mr. Simmons stated that they appreciated LaVita's role in getting the original festival established and were grateful for their continued support; however, they agreed with Mr. Walter's earlier comment that other restaurants/businesses might be more inclined to participate if the event was held at a neutral location. They also discussed moving the date out to late spring and Mr. Weissbach suggested synching up the event with the Swing Bridge's 100th Anniversary celebration. Ms. Mathiasen stated that the next step is for Mr. Odell and Mr. Walter to meet with (Jackie) to get her feedback on changing the date of the event and possibly moving it to the Town Office Site parking lot.

EDC as Non-Profit Sponsor of East Haddam Stage Company for Humanities Council Grant – Ms. Mathiasen advised that the East Haddam Stage Company has requested EDC to act as its non-profit sponsor for a grant application they would like to submit to the Humanities Council. She noted there are rolling deadlines for the Humanities Council grants and the next two deadlines are February 1 and May 1. In response to questions from Mr. Simmons, she advised that the approximate grant amount would be \$5,000.00 and that the required matching funds would be raised through business and personal donations. She confirmed there would be no cost to the Town. Mr. Simmons stated the grant process is to bring the proposal to the Board of Selectmen and then the Board of Finance so meeting the May deadline would be feasible.

Options for Route 151/82 Directory Sign – Mr. Parady reported that First Selectman Walter had authorized funding to have the sign repainted and he would like the Commissioners input on a new color. He agreed to bring a sample business sign and color chips to the next meeting for their consideration.

Business Database Update – There was no update on this agenda item.

NEW BUSINESS

EDC Budget Proposal – Mr. Simmons distributed a copy of a memo he had sent to Mr. Odell proposing several expenses he suggests be added to the EDC budget. He requested the Commissioners review his proposal and that it be added to the next meeting's agenda as a discussion topic. In response to a question from Mr. Weissbach, Mr. Simmons confirmed that the First Selectman has been accessible and is very supportive of economic development for the Town.

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

Mail Received – Mr. Simmons stated there was no mail for discussion.

Public Comment/Other – Mr. Matthews stated that he believes that EDC is doing a great deal of good work for the business community; however, he does not feel the information is getting back to the businesses. Mr. Simmons noted that EDC is working on developing an electronic newsletter which he expects will help with EDC's communication problems.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

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