

**Joint East Haddam/Haddam
Economic Development Commission Meeting Minutes
January 6, 2011**

Attending for East Haddam EDC: J. Albuquerque R. Casner; M. Gionta; D. Mathiasen; E. Odell, R. Parady, G. Rucker,
M. Ziobron (EDC Coordinator)

Attending for Haddam EDC : M. Fortuna, T. Gidius (EDC Coordinator), L. Maggi, D. Papallo, (other?), E. Vynalek

Guests : W. Vincent (Patch.com); M. Walter, S. Wheeler

Ms. Ziobron called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.

Each participant introduced themselves and provided information on how long they have been involved with EDC.

HADDAM INITIATIVES

Mr. Fortuna advised that Haddam's EDC is focusing on re-zoning and infrastructure issues, in particular a sewer system in Higganum and piping in water from Chester for Tylerville. He stated that the goal is to improve the villages of Haddam to attract business development to those areas and avoid sprawl in the suburban/rural areas. He said that the addition of the EDC Coordinator position has helped with the continuity of those goals.

He advised that Haddam recently established a Commission for the Advancement of the Haddam Villages. He also discussed business development in Haddam and noted regionalizing opportunities for Haddam and East Haddam with the Tylerville water project as well as East Haddam's Village sewer system.

In response to a question from Mr. Albuquerque, Mr. Vynalek advised that the issues with the transfer station have been resolved and the project is moving forward.

EAST HADDAM INITIATIVES

Mr. Gionta provided background information on the East Haddam Village project. He advised that the main focus has been on the Town Office site parcel; however, since a minimum critical mass of 40,000 sq. ft. is required to attract developers, additional developable space in the Village has been identified which would bring the project to approximately 50,000 sq. ft. He stated that a conceptual drawing has been created for the Town Office site which envisions buildings of the size and style of others in the Village, with shops on the first floor and offices/small apartments on the second floor, on a small park-like setting. He stated that the Committee plans to issue an RFQ for developers in the near future.

Ms. Mathiasen provided info on the Goodspeed's Actors' Housing project and stated that they expect the houses to be ready for occupancy during the theater's upcoming season. She noted that once the new houses are completed, it will free us some of the other Goodspeed buildings for commercial development.

Ms. Ziobron advised that she is working with a business entrepreneur that wants to open a brewery in the East Haddam Village. She stated that the individual is currently negotiating a well easement with the Goodspeed. She also informed the Commissioners that a new bed-and-breakfast recently opened in the Seraph/Boardman house. There was a general discussion about the number of bedrooms a bed-and-breakfast can offer without having to apply for a permit.

Ms. Mathiasen reported that Ms. Stricker has been following up with the State on the old Sunrise Resort property. She advised that the State commissioned a utilities study at the property and will be going out with an RFP at the end of January. In response to a question from Mr. Fortuna, Ms. Ziobron confirmed that a previous RFP had been issued, but the State had not pursued either of the two responses. She noted that East Haddam is hopeful that some action will be taken on the property soon because there has been vandalism and two fires on the property.

In response to a question from Mr. Vynalek, Ms. Ziobron advised that Johnsonville is still on the market and noted that she has referred several potential purchasers to the agent. She stated that a building on the grounds recently collapsed which has motivated the EDC to encourage the Town to pursue a blight ordinance.

Mr. Vynalek also inquired about Klar Krest Resort and Mr. Walter confirmed that it is in foreclosure; however, the owner is trying to get re-financing. He stated that the owner had focused his funds on rehabilitating the buildings and ran out of money when he started to work on the camp's infrastructure. He noted the difficulties of working with the State on infrastructure issues such as water and sewer. There was a general discussion regarding the impacts of water/sewer delays on economic development. Mr. Fortuna stated that Haddam will hold a public hearing on their infrastructure projects in the near future.

TOURISM INITIATIVES

Ms. Ziobron reported that the Eagle Festival has been scaled back in size for a number of years since it lost its corporate sponsor; however, the Essex Steam Train has continued the Eagle Flier runs and, last year, reached out to East Haddam to organize a shuttle to the Village from the Goodspeed Station. Ms. Mathiasen advised that the shuttle had limited success, mainly because there was not much time to publicize it. She stated that the Flier will be operating on February 19 & 20 and will have two runs each day. Due to Commissioner schedules, East Haddam will not pursue the shuttle idea this year. Ms. Ziobron suggested that if the Haddam EDC wants to coordinate any events with the Eagle Flier runs, the East Haddam EDC would be happy to support their efforts. She encouraged them to think about opportunities to capitalize on the event and notify her of any action.

Ms. Mathiasen reported that the annual East Haddam Chowder Festival will be held in March and Ms. Ziobron will let the Haddam EDC know the date once it is selected. Ms. Ziobron provided some information about the festival and suggested that Haddam might want to coordinate some complimentary events for the same day.

REGIONAL ISSUES

Ms. Ziobron reported that CT DOT planned repairs to the swing bridge, scheduled for spring of 2011, are being delayed for approximately 1 year and that their planned repairs on Route 82 in Haddam (at Route 9/exit 7) will take place in the spring/early summer of 2011. In response to a question from Ms. Maggi, Ms. Ziobron stated that she had attended the public hearing on the proposed close of the Chester Ferry. She reported that the meeting was very well attended and that 2000 citizens have signed a petition to keep the ferry running. She stated that the DOT has not been told that the ferry service will be discontinued so they are continuing to make plans for resuming service in the spring. She noted that the East Haddam Land Use Administrator is writing a letter to the State encouraging them not to discontinue service.

There was a general discussion regarding the impact on traffic from the State's planned projects. In response to a question from Ms. Ziobron, Mr. Papallo provided information on the seasonal schedules for the swingbridge openings and Mr. Walter reviewed the steps that had been taken last year to notify drivers of when the bridge is open. The proposal to add a footbridge was discussed and Mr. Fortuna stated that he has gotten good feedback whenever he mentions the proposal. Ms. Ziobron stated she has been waiting to find out when an appropriations request can be re-submitted to Representative Courtney's office. She and Mr. Gidius agreed to collaborate on a draft letter to the State in support of the proposal.

Ms. Ziobron reported that the Mid-State Regional Planning Agency is soliciting towns to take advantage of some ARRA funding that is still available for shovel-ready projects.

In response to a question from Mr. Albuquerque, Mr. Papallo and Mr. Vynalek stated that they don't believe the plans for extending a freight line along the CT River will be going forward but that, eventually, the Essex Steam Train may continue its line up to Middletown.

Ms. Ziobron advised that Senator Daily had attended East Haddam's November EDC meeting in response to communications regarding the proposed land swap. She stated she would like to open up a discussion about the land swap deal. Mr. Fortuna stated that the Haddam EDC unanimously supports the deal and he expects it will be re-visited this year. Ms. Ziobron stated that the East Haddam EDC is supportive of more economic growth in Tylerville; however, it is concerned about the possibility of the Goodspeed building a new theatre and related retail village across the river. She reported that Senator Daily had advised the East Haddam Commissioners that the Goodspeed was no longer part of the land-swap deal. Mr. Fortuna confirmed that Mr. Price had attended one of the Haddam EDC meeting to explore opportunities to build a new theatre across the river. Mr. Vynalek asked if there was any way the towns could influence the language in the legislation to limit what can be developed on the Tylerville parcel. Mr. Fortuna stated that he did not feel it would be a good idea to put any deed restrictions on the property.

Ms. Ziobron stated that she understands the two towns may take opposing positions on this issue, but noted that she wanted to get it out on the table with the hope of avoiding the many issues that arose out of the last proposal. She stated that, whatever, came out of the land-swap deal, she hoped the two towns could work together for their mutual benefit.

OTHER

Mr. Walter advised that the State is considering establishing five COGs to replace the current Regional Planning Organizations and confirmed that Haddam's First Selectman DeStefano is aware of the initiative. The Selectmen of the Mid-State RPO were proposing to combine with the Estuary RPO into one COG with the CT River as the unifying factor, rather than have the State assign a different combination.

In response to a question from Mr. Casner, Mr. Fortuna advised that the Tylerville water system is designed and engineered and just needs funding to be implemented.

NEXT STEPS

Ms. Ziobron and Mr. Gidius agreed to collaborate on a draft letter to various State and Federal agencies in support of a project to build a footbridge by the swingbridge.

FUTURE MEETING DATE

The Commissioners agreed to schedule their next joint meeting for April 13th in Haddam.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon R. Wheeler
Recording Secretary