

**Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2008**

Attending: J. Albuquerque; M. Gionta; D. Mathiasen; D. Sloan; R. Scherrer; P. Stricker; M. Ziobron (EDC Coordinator)
Guests: H. Kittner; D. McMahon (Goodspeed); M. Walter (First Selectman)

Mr. Scherrer called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

MINUTES

MR. SLOAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE APRIL 3, 2008 MEETING MINUTES. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY MS. STRICKER AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

OLD BUSINESS

Economic Development Coordinator Update

Ms. Ziobron distributed her monthly report which has been filed with minutes at Town Hall. Following summarizes that report

- The East Haddam Village Ad Hoc Committee charge that she had helped draft had been approved at the April 16th Board of Selectmen meeting.
- Prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the Middle School Conversion Committee public forum held on April 28th. The Committee needs EDC's input for regarding the cost-benefit of the Middle School Conversion project as it relates to the Town Office Site project.
- Held several meetings with Town officials and the realtor regarding the Dunkin Donuts proposed lease of a building in the Moodus plaza.
- Continues work with Shagbark and Town officials on Shagbark's expansion project.
- Represented EDC in Town's successful bond rating meeting with Standard & Poors.
- Working with Moodus-based Kito regarding expansion of their facility.
- Sale discussions between the Brownell Company and potential purchaser have ceased and the owner is considering listing the property with a commercial real estate agent.
- Attended a Middlesex Revitalization Committee meeting and offered to host their next quarterly meeting in East Haddam. The organization provides low cost loans of up to \$50,000 to new businesses.
- The Midstate Regional Planning group is considering grant applications from the Town and the Red Cross for funds to purchase a wheelchair assessable vehicle. She noted that the Town has not had a representative at the meetings for a number of years.
- Continues to work with Susan Kelly on her coffee house project in the Village.
- Continues to work with Rodney Davis on his age-restricted housing development.

Mr. Scherrer thanked Ms. Ziobron for her report and stated that he would like to amend the meeting agenda to allow Mr. Walter to discuss several new business committees he would like to create. There were no objections.

Mr. Walter stated that, in addition to the East Haddam Village Ad Hoc Committee and the Village Revitalization Commission previously discussed at EDC meetings, he would like to create advisory committees for the Industrial Park and Moodus Center areas. He stated that the economic contributions of the two areas need to be recognized. Mr. Walter stated that the charges for the advisory committees still need to be drafted but the outline he has in mind is that committee members will be made up from representatives of the respective business communities, the committees will report to EDC, and will be responsible for creating a vision for well planned, walkable business centers for each section.

Mr. Scherrer solicited feedback on Mr. Walter's proposal from the other Commissioners and there was a general discussion about the appropriate make up of the advisory committees Mr. Scherrer stated that he feels that the Village Revitalization Commission and the two advisory committees should each be assigned a representative from EDC and the Commissioners agreed.

Mr. Gionta reported that the Village Ad Hoc Committee was formally approved at the April 16th Board of Selectmen's meeting. He stated that he is one of the members of the Committee and will set-up their first meeting later this month. He reiterated that the purpose of the committee is to make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on how to use the balance of the Mobility Study grant funds to make traffic calming and safety recommendations. Mr. Gionta noted that the Committee's charge stated that they should consult with Fuss & O'Neill concerning possible recommendations and stated that he will invite Kent Schwendy to the meetings.

Project Status Reports

Goodspeed Properties Ms. Kittner advised that the civil engineer has been moving forward with his work and she expects they will get his report on May 7th. She stated that she and Mr. McMahon have been meeting with several residents of the Village and listening to their concerns. She noted that they have told the residents that they are willing to compromise and make some adjustments to the actors' housing, however, the general layout and plan will not change substantially.

Town Office Site – East Haddam Village Ad Hoc Committee – The discussion on this item was reported earlier in the minutes.

Johnsonville – Mr. Sloan reported that he had spoken with the Simon Real Estate Group. Mr. Sloan stated that he is still cautiously optimistic, however, expressed some concern about what impact the real estate market in general will have on this project.

Banner – Mr. Sloan reported that, last month, two additional closings had taken place and three more units are under contract. In response to a question from Mr. Scherrer, both Mr. Sloan and Ms. Stricker agreed that EDC should keep the Banner development on their list of projects to track because the next phase of development will be starting soon.

Other Business Updates – Ms. Mathiasen reported that she and Mr. Sloan had researched the issue of commercial tax assessment appeals. Mr. Sloan reported that if a business owner wants to appeal a tax assessment in excess of \$500,000.00, the town assessor has the right to refer the appeal to the Superior Court. If that happens the business owner is required to hire an attorney and provide a great deal of documentation that will result in significant expenses.

Ms. Mathiasen and Mr. Sloan both stated that they feel the \$500,000.00 assessment is a very low threshold and Ms. Mathiasen advised that she will draft a letter to the State Legislators about the matter. Ms. Ziobron stated she should address the letter to Representative Linda Orange and recommended they contact CBIA and Mr. Assante for help in drafting the letter.

Ms. Mathiasen reported that the Town's assessor has agreed to meet with the Town's affected business owners on a case-by-case basis and will include the consultant who did the re-appraisals in those discussions. She confirmed that Mr. Walter had contacted the five business owners who had received letters from the Town Board of Assessment Appeals concerning their request to appeal their business' new assessment.

Events/Tourism

Town-wide Scavenger Hunt participation (May 16-18) – Ms. Mathiasen reported that she had worked with Youth and Family Services to make changes to the letter they sent to Town businesses regarding the planned Town-wide Scavenger Hunt.

June Business Night with the Chamber – Ms. Ziobron stated that the purpose of the June Business Night is to try to reinvigorate communication between the businesses and the Town. Ms. Mathiasen advised that she and Ms. Ziobron will do a presentation about how the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce can help Town business and what resources they offer.

Arts Festival Letter to Village Businesses – Ms. Mathiasen reported that she had received a copy of the Arts Festival Letter from Ms. Quinn, however, she wasn't sure whether it was a draft or the final version. She noted that she will follow-up with Ms. Quinn.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Scherrer, it was determined that the Town Clerk had indicated she would schedule a second session regarding the Freedom of Information Act but that it had not yet occurred.

NEW BUSINESS

Mail received – There was no mail to discuss.

Other – Ms. Mathiasen reported that Staeley Gardens would like to be added to EDC's business directory sign. Ms. Mathiasen reported that EDC's free ad had been pulled from the Town's quarterly newsletter because of a lack of space. She further advised that the publisher had informed her that, contrary to her original understanding, it was not their policy to publish articles submitted by businesses that are not advertisers. There was a general discussion concerning the best way to address both issues and the Commissioners agreed that EDC should pay for its ad to guaranteed its publication. They further agreed that Ms. Mathiasen should secure an agreement with the publisher that, on the basis of EDC's paid ad, at least one article submitted by a non-advertising East Haddam business would be published each quarter.

Ms. Mathiasen also reported on the following items:

- EDC's Tourism brochure needs to be updated and she will follow-up on that task.

- The Rotary invited EDC to do a presentation regarding its current projects at their May 22nd meeting. Ms. Mathiasen volunteered to draft the presentation and she, Mr. Scherrer and Ms. Ziobron will attend the meeting.
- The Regional Standard had published an update on the Middle School building project and reported that grant funds were being held up due to State Bonding issues.

THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO DISCUSS, MR. GIONTA MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY MS. MATHIASEN AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon R. Wheeler
Recording Secretary