

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
October 5, 2017 – 4:45 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Dowling, Melin, Legnos, Young, Cote, Hatcher, Brooks, Preka(4:53p), Mathanool (5:13p)

Absent:

Other: Nault, Valente, Obrey

Staff: Burt, Bronk, Eisenbeiser, Post

The Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 4:50 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 7, 2017

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the September 7, 2017 meeting as amended

Motion made by Dowling, seconded by Melin; passed 6-0-1 abstention (Hatcher)

- III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS- John Burt – Burt provided the commission with an overview of his professional background. Burt reviewed his goals for the town and said he is pleased with the economic development efforts thus far. Burt said there were great projects being worked on currently: streamlining processes, stand-alone ED website, Doing Business in Groton Guide, increasing tourism, better marketing of the town, branding/logo, wayfinding signage etc. He also would like to look into a new town website, ramp up social media, see development of town owned properties, he is supportive of TIF, and would like to see the city put aside funding for the development of Thames Street, and 5 corners. Burt would also like to get more of the workforce to live in Groton. He said there isn't enough housing in the mid-price range that he has found, and he would like to work on the public transportation system (you currently can't get from one side of town to the other), he would like to be appointed to the SEAT board. He likes all of the trails Groton has but would like to see the watershed open up for trails in the future. He does want to increase the sense of place, diversify the tax base, create a retention and expansion plan, keep taxes low, and look at all functions and see where we can work together.

IV. REPORTS

1. Chairperson – Preka stated that he, Young, and Bronk had a great meeting regarding what the upcoming year holds. Preka met with Bronk regarding the agenda, stating it is important to have a solid agenda. Preka feels that it is important to meet with staff monthly and he hopes that continues.
2. Staff- Bronk reviewed the Staff report that was previously submitted via email.

Marketing/Website – Bronk stated that the web design process is on target and that staff has selected a preferred template. Bronk said that the video production is being worked on and will be released after the website.

Logo/Branding Contest – Staff unveiled the logo to the commission at last month's meeting. Bronk passed around the brochure from NEDA featuring the logo.

CT Next/Innovation Places – The new executive director of TRIP was announced. David McBride, a resident of Groton Long Point, will work full time with TRIP. There is a new company, ThayerMahan, opening on Leonard Drive. A ribbon cutting will be held on October 19th. ThayerMahan will offer mobile autonomous acoustic search systems falling in line with the expansion of undersea companies in Groton.

Financing Forum – Staff hosted a financing forum with the goal of creating relationships between traditional and non-traditional lenders so that they may better serve small business seeking financing. The event was successful and informative; attendees were interested in participating in future events.

Doing Business in Groton Guide – Staff does have the final guide and is working on formatting internally. This will help new businesses understand Groton and maneuver through the system as well as providing them with resources.

Wayfinding Signage – Staff continues to have meetings with Beta. This is part of branding Groton and creating a sense of place. There is not funding for implementation at this time.

Legnos left at 5:38 pm

TIF – Staff is currently working on a policy document for TIF. The city is very interested in participating with TIF. There are a couple of developers that are anxious to utilize TIF in town.

Incentive Application – Eisenbeiser has been working on a preliminary application for incentives. This would be used to understand what the needs are and directing them properly.

Mystic Education Center – The RFP is still being worked on. Staff will meet with the State on Friday.

Groton Heights – An application was submitted to the City for a text amendment. This is not specific to just Groton Heights but will be used for any property that is institutionally owned. The public hearing is on October 17th at 7:30p at City Hall.

Gold Star Hwy – Staff continues negotiations with a developer.

Seely School – Conversations have taken place with abutters and signage has been installed onsite notifying the public of the development opportunity.

Bronk met with Thomas Matthew, the Economic Development Specialist for the City. He is looking to have another meet and greet with the City/Town EDC on either November 15th or the 29th from 5p-7p.

3. Liaisons:

Groton Utilities – GU liaison report was submitted via email. Brooks reported that GU received the first shipment of lights on Tuesday, 2300 lights will be installed first on major roadways followed by ornamental lights. A preconstruction meeting was held on September 25th for the rebuilding of the Water Treatment Plant. Mobilization began on September 27th. The Wayne Road water main project was completed. GU held a ribbon

cutting ceremony on September 21st at the Polaris Park solar gardens. Brooks stated that he always reports on the larger projects that occur but he stated that the daily work of the men and women should be highlighted more for the job they do. FEMA reached out to NEPA, Norwich and GU responded and they will go to the US Virgin Islands to help with restoration of power from hurricane damage.

Groton Business Association – The GBA liaison report was previously submitted via email. Valente reported that the fall festival is Saturday, October 7th at Poquonnock Plains. The next GBA meeting is on October 5th; John Burt will be the speaker at the next GBA meeting.

Downtown Mystic Merchants – The Downtown Mystic Merchants liaison report was previously submitted via email. Valente reported that DMM Mystic Eats Food Festival had record breaking attendance. Since this event is outdoor and the weather was great which is helpful. The Pirate Invasion was again successful this year. They are looking to do first Friday where merchants stay open longer on the first Friday of the month.

RTM – Obrey reported that it is quiet at the RTM, they had a public hearing at the Town Council meeting on the Charter revision recommendation. She stated that a big topic was the recommendation to dissolve the RTM.

Town Council – Nault reported that they are busy with meetings and reminded everyone that elections take place in November.

Business Outreach – Preka stated that outreach has been important. Cote reported that the subcommittee held an outreach meeting on the 20th. The meeting minutes were provided via email for review. The basis of the meeting was to follow the direction of the commission. A business listing was provided to the commission for selection.

Young reviewed her report on Chelsea Groton Bank that was previously submitted via email for review. She touched on the comment from the manager stating that there are many banks in Groton but the only bank who has their headquarters in Groton is Chelsea Groton Bank.

Dowling reviewed her report on Lee Toy and Hobby that was submitted via email for review. She stated that the owners said they hadn't been visited by someone from the town before and were happy. They suggested that they resurrect the magic mile annual event to promote business in Groton. Businesses worked together and had outdoor sales and specials. This ran from the Big Y Plaza to about Webster's Bank Plaza. They also would like subbase families to be encouraged to do business in Groton but that transportation can be an issue.

Preka reviewed his report on Savings Institute that was submitted via email for review. The Savings Institute reported a positive experience with their relocation.

Cote visited Mint Leaf and spoke with the owner, when he came to Groton he had a positive experience with the process. He is trying to help other business owners in their process. Cote suggested everyone visit, it is a fresh new business. Cote stated that Mint Leaf is one piece of downtown and if businesses like this continue to open there will really be a sense of place in downtown.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. General Discussion – Melin again raised the issue that if we aren't pulling in the same direction on initiatives there are duplication of efforts. There are so many different groups working on their own piece, it isn't effective. Bronk stated that staff doesn't

always know what is going on everywhere. There are a lot of silos in the area where people are working alone and there are so many meetings and events and it can take away from progress. Bronk states that he thinks an open, slow, diligent conversation with people would need to happen to try to bridge the gap.

Cote asked that all commission members pick a business for outreach. The subcommittee made the list with multiple businesses so there would be a continuous supply for commissioners to choose from monthly. Cote also stated he attended the zoning commission meeting for 1 Bank Street, the presentation was very professional. They didn't pass the change in zoning and it was disappointing.

Melin left on 6:38p.

Hatcher reported that there will be an event a Mohegan Sun, VETS ROCK on November 3rd. The event will have veteran owned vendors, a career fair for vets and there will also be a concert featuring Joe Walsh and Eddie Money, tickets can be purchased for the concert.

2. EDC Achievements 2017 – Preka stated that at the next meeting they need to be respectful of the time to get through agenda items. Preka asked them to think about what has been done in the past year, stating that they have done a lot of good things. These items will be used to put together the annual report.
3. EDC Commissioner Positions – Young is interested in the Chair position, Melin has expressed interest in Vice Chair, and Hatcher is interested in the Secretary position for 2018. Preka stated attendance is important for EDC members and that the officers will be voted on at the November meeting.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. 2017 Annual Report– Preka asked the commission to submit achievements for 2017 to be included in the Annual report.

V. ADJOURNMENT

1. Motion to adjourn at 6:50 pm was made by Hatcher, seconded by Dowling; so voted unanimously.

Dave Cote, Secretary
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Lauren Post
Office Assistant II