

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 4, 2016 – 4:45 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Preka, Dowling, Young, Vignato, Cote, Mathanool (5:14p)
Absent: Legnos, McCormack, Hatcher
Other: Valente, Nault, Barber
Staff: Bronk, Post

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:47 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES January 7, 2016 meeting

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the January 7, 2016 meeting as amended.

Motion made by Dowling, seconded by Cote, so voted unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS-

1. Mayor Galbraith – The Mayor spoke to the Commission regarding CT Sub Century (SubCen). She gave a brief summary of the significance of SubCen and various ways the public can get involved. Mayor Galbraith stated there is a Facebook page for SubCen that you can “like” and get updates and goings on, #submarineproud is the hashtag being used to engage people to post on social media as to why they are submarine proud. Also, there is information on the website (www.ctsubmarinecentury.com) pertaining to all things SubCen. They will have a CT Sub Trail similar to the Whale Trail, where 20 fiberglass submarines will be available for sponsors to purchase. Once purchased various Artists will paint them and they will be on display at locations throughout SECT. There will be an app developed to locate the trail. At this point 12 of the 20 whales have been sold. Mayor Galbraith will be speaking at the next GBA meeting held at Electric Boat.

2. Juliet Hodge- Hodge stated she and Preka are hoping to have a meet and greet in March for the City and Town’s EDC. Hodge said it is CEDS year at seCTer. CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) focuses on the Economic Development of the region and is done every 5 years. CEDS identifies larger goals in the region, starting with the bigger picture on improving economy in the region and then finding ways each town can participate. It provides valuable data analysis, is a way to get a good return on investment, and in some cases an extra point is awarded on some grant applications for participation. There will be 5 public input sessions with the first meeting at the end of February. Hodge said it was important to reach out to business owners to attend the SWOT meetings which will represent 4-5 towns at a time. Valente asked how they combine ideas from all of the different towns, Hodge said she is hoping that the responses are consistent and everyone is on the same page. Bronk said ideally there are commonalities that impact the region that come out during these meetings. Young asked if this is done around the country and if so are they all done around the same time, Hodge said yes but not around the same time.

IV. REPORTS

1. Chairperson – Chair’s report was previously submitted by email for review. Preka said the 2015 annual report was presented by Dowling to the Town Council and was well attended by the commission. He encouraged commissioners to attend other meetings to show support and find out more of what they do. Hodge and Preka met this past month and really feel that the town and the city can work together as one commission.
2. Strategic Planning Subcommittee – no meeting, no report.
3. Staff –Staff report was previously submitted by email for review. Bronk said filling the Economic Development Specialist position is a big focus at this point. We received a good pool of candidates and are hoping to start the interview process within the next couple of weeks.

The Focus Group Meeting for the Market Analysis/Zoning Audit was held on January 11th and was well attended. This effort is continuing to progress with the next step being to finalize the documents and address action steps.

Bronk stated we will begin working on marketing and promotion material. Bronk established a dedicated business email infobusiness@groton-ct.gov for use with business inquiries. Staff has been working with Camoin regarding marketing/promotion materials focusing on the website, email, social media, and hard copy materials. Groton hasn’t fully promoted itself outside the area.

Staff received a call from the DECD about moving forward and preparing to issue a grant so the Town can work on marketing the Mystic Education Center. Bronk toured the property with a major architectural firm who indicated interest in partnering with a developer.

The electric vehicle project will be implemented by spring. Staff will apply for a second round of grants for additional charging stations.

The Brownfield grant wasn’t awarded. There will be another round of grants and the Town was encouraged by the State to submit the same proposal.

ADZ is still ongoing and a priority. The development and submittal of the application is a major undertaking.

There are numerous projects that Staff has been working on. We are committed to putting in an information center. Staff is currently evaluating two options for the use of the Policing Station for the kiosk. Thames River Heritage park, there have been several meetings and they are gearing up for the water taxi during the summer. The proposals for the water taxi are due mid- February. Staff has been participating with SeCTer on the CEDS process. This is an ongoing effort over the next several months. Staff provided comments for the NE Rail corridor in favor of option 1.

Staff attended a number of meetings (State, CERC, Chamber, GBA, DMMA, etc) DMMA was an energized meeting, they are engaged and passionate. Staff

gave a presentation to the RTM to keep them up to date on efforts. There has been a lot of outreach done. Staff has met with property owners, attended ribbon cuttings, continues communications with current and potential businesses via email/phone, and had a meeting with key participants regarding the Seeley School effort.

Dowling asked when the final meeting will be on the Market Analysis and Young followed up asking when we can expect to see the final recommendations. Staff says there isn't a deadline and that he would expect it to be a couple of months.

Vignato asked about the tour at the Mystic Education Center, Staff said specialty housing for aging population or millennium population was suggested. Valente asked if the ADZ was still moving, Staff said it was in neutral at this point and requires a lot of staff but that it was still a priority.

4. Liaisons:

Groton Business Association – Valente reported there were about 50 people in attendance at the January 21st GBA meeting. The next meeting is at 7:30am Feb 18th at Electric Boat and you must RSVP for this meeting which can be done on the Mystic Chamber site. There will be an overview on EB and Mayor Marian Galbraith will be speaking about SubCen. National Aviation Day is on Friday August 19th. The GBA is looking to host an event at Groton Airport, having tours and vintage airplanes during the day and gala at night. Young stated this was tentative as approval is needed from the Airport Authority.

Downtown Mystic Merchants –Valente reported there is a change in leadership with DMM. Todd Brady, owner of Factory Square, is now the Chairman of the Board. Brady wants to make a shift from being just events driven to solving problems like parking, vacancies in downtown store fronts, info booth, etc. Valente is pleased with the communication between the Town, EDC, etc.

Town Council – No report was submitted

MOTION: To accept the reports presented.

Motion made by Dowling, seconded by Vignato, so voted unanimously

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Market Analysis and Zoning Audit Update- Bronk updated this during staff report but stressed that it is not too late to provide comments stating staff wants as many comments as possible. Bronk stated that an ultimate deadline on the Market Analysis can't be provided because we want to get it right and make sure all the comments are integrated well. Once administration is satisfied then it will be done. They will have one final meeting with the council.

Dowling asked if we are in constant communication with the consultants, Bronk said we communicate almost weekly with either phone calls or conference calls. Cote asked

what the best way is to direct comments for the Market Analysis; Bronk responded that email to Bronk is best.

Young asked if it stated on the website that providing comments, staff thought it was there but will check. Young said it was important and felt it should be there.

Hodge asked if we owned the data after it was complete. Bronk said we will and they can discuss later.

2. Strategic Planning- Preka stated that he is looking to have guest speakers at every meeting. Last month Jon Reiner was scheduled, today we had Mayor Marian Galbraith speak, and next month Town Manager Mark Oefinger will attend. Dowling stated that does tie into the goals that were identified by the commission.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. EDC Business Outreach Brochure – Preka stated when the EDC goes to local businesses it is important that they have a speech prepared and a hand out for a more professional appearance. The goal is to go to one business per month letting them know who the EDC are and what they do. Preka stated we are looking for inputs, both positive and negative, as well as letting the businesses know we are another resource for them. The brochure presented tonight is a draft, we would like it finalized for the next meeting. Mathonool asked if Preka had looked to see what New Haven has done, Preka wasn't aware that they had a brochure but would look. Valente asked what exactly the purpose was for existing businesses in Groton to know about EDC, Bronk said it provides credibility; we are trying to get more engagement from the business community. Bronk said ideally we would like to have under public communications a few businesses that are invited each month to come and speak, share ideas, and concerns.

Mathonool suggested we have Bill Smith take a look at the brochure from his marketing background. Staff said we would do that. Valente asked what the guidelines are for public communications, Staff said anyone can come and speak at the meetings. Young stated we talked about the process of visiting business but are we going to present a speech to them or to tell them who we are and then listen to them. Cote said we are there to find out both positive and negative experiences they have with their businesses in the community. Preka said that we are an advisory board; we are here to help and we have many resources to be able to do so. Bronk said that we want to listen, document the highlights, bring it to the meeting or send it ahead of time, encourage them to bring it to us, there isn't going to be a script just listening and engaging in the conversation.

Young wants to make sure that we are all on the same page and giving the same information when going to speak to business. Dowling wants to make sure that everyone isn't going to speak to the same business owners, stating there needs to be some tracking and follow up to let everyone know where they have gone and the outcome. Cote thinks it's a great idea, a simple thing the commission can do and once it is finalized we might find we are more focused and powerful with what types of businesses we are looking to target. Nault stated that the EDC names should be on the brochure and if efforts are combined with the city those names should be on there as well.

3. EDC Meeting Location- There has been discussion that the meeting locations vary from month to month. Preka states that he wants businesses to come to the meetings and if we change location monthly it won't make it as inviting. Valente suggested that it should remain at a fixed location and if they are looking to visit other businesses they are welcome to come to GBA. Cote agreed saying it should only be by exception on a case by case basis that they hold meetings at other businesses.

4. EDC Meeting Participation - Preka stated attendance should be mandatory for the EDC meetings. Commission members are appointed by the Town Manager and it is important that there is always a quorum. If the goal is having public participation, various speakers are invited and then we don't have quorum we discourage the community and ourselves. Cote stated that you are supposed to email staff if you aren't attending,

5. Other Business - Hodge stated she liked being open with communication and about being one commission but that we would need to ease in to it. There is a lot going on and maybe we could start by meeting quarterly depending on what each commission was working on. Cote agreed suggesting that at every meeting (both the City and Town) a liaison from each attends the meeting then the two groups meet quarterly that way information is shared between the two. Nault stated that all the efforts of the city benefit the town (and vice versa) and thinks it would be beneficial for there to just be one, as they all have great ideas. Preka stated that maybe meeting quarterly would be best picking a project to work on together. Nault asked how the City commission felt to which Hodge replied that they are receptive to the idea. Hodge stated they would need permission from the Mayor or City Council.

Bronk mentioned the new Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) tool available in CT. CT legislation now allows this which brings the state up to standard with other states. The tool enables the front-loading of finding for major development areas such as Downtown Groton. It promotes public-private partnerships. Reiner and Bronk will attend more training on this shortly.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 6:22 pm made by Dowling, seconded by Young, so voted unanimously

Catherine Young, Secretary
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Lauren Post
Office Assistant II