

MINUTES  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
March 2, 2017 – 4:45 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Cote, Dowling, Hatcher, Preka, Young, Melin, Brooks, Legnos (4:53),  
Mathanool (5:07p)  
Absent: Denno  
Other: Nault, Powers, Barber  
Staff: Bronk, Eisenbeiser, Reiner, Jones, Post

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:48 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 2, 2017

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the February 2, 2017 meeting as amended

Motion made by Dowling, seconded by Young; so voted unanimously

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS-

IV. REPORTS

1. Chairperson – Preka reported that he attends many meetings and speaks to various businesses throughout the month and always asks business how things are going in the community for them. He stated that people always give the town 5 out of 5 stars. Each month he has a meeting with Bronk to set agenda and discuss what is going on. Preka reached out to Mystic Chamber to invite them to have a liaison, Peggy Chambers and Preka will meet soon to discuss. Preka congratulated staff for ADZ award.

2. Staff– Staff report was previously submitted by email for review

Nault stated that she thought Norwich had received grant money from the state and asked if we requested money from the state for property. Bronk stated that we have applied for brownfield money and we received money to market Mystic Oral School. Bronk stated that he would pursue it further.

Airport Development Zone – Staff announced the official award by DECD for the Airport Development Zone.

Public Property Redevelopment (Mystic Oral School) – Staff has now received access to the property.

Marketing/Website – There were a tremendous amount of responses to the RFP (28) for the website. Staff is currently in the process of narrowing the firms and will schedule interviews shortly.

CT Next-Innovation Places – Staff reported that they have been working with SPARK, CURE, New London, and City of Groton on a Thames River Innovation Project (TRIP) effort. Staff said it has been challenging but the submittal was sent in early March.

Community Wayfinding Signage – Staff received multiple proposals for this initiative as well. Interviews have been set up for the middle of March.

Economic Assistance Fund – Staff presented the revised guidelines to the Town Council. They have been approved and are now in effect.

Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) – Staff has worked with seCTer in finalizing a draft CEDs document. The final report is posted online and submitted to the State.

3. Liaisons:

Groton Business Association – GBA report was previously submitted by email for review. Preka reviewed report that was submitted by Valente. The GBA submitted a letter to the Zoning Commission regarding the WRPD.

Downtown Mystic Merchants – DMM report was previously submitted by email for review. Preka reviewed report that was submitted by Valente. DMMA sent a letter to the Zoning Commission regarding the WRPD.

RTM – Powers attended the EDC meeting for Obrey.

Town Council – Nault and Barber gave an update on the status with Town Manager position. They feel they are on par to fill the position by June.

Motion to move the Zoning Update before business outreach discussion was made by Melin, seconded by Dowling.

1. Zoning Update - Deb Jones and Jon Reiner gave the EDC an update on the Zoning rewrite, specifically the WRPD. Reiner stated that they have been working on this over the last year. The purpose of the WRPD is to protect the watershed, land that either drains to the reservoir system or to Haley Brook which has been identified as a future water supply. Reiner stated that Ledyard doesn't have a WRPD and they have been watching Groton and have asked to use it as a model.

Jones passed out maps of the area showing that most of the watershed is zoned residential and is undeveloped. The majority of both the industrial and commercial acreage is located outside of the WRPD. 42% of all commercially zoned land is in the WRPD. 13% of all industrial zoned land is in the WRPD. Jones stated that the wetlands and the reservoir are vitally important to the town and the region. The Zoning Commission is recommending additional restrictions to prevent potential contaminations. The current regulations have been amended a number of times, they are subject to interpretation and the goal is to make it easy to read and understand. The existing regulations prohibit a number of uses (auto repair, dealers, gas stations, engine repair etc.).

There is a lot of confusing language from current regulations, the goal during the rewrite is for them to be clear and make sense.

With the proposed regulations the purpose remains the same, to protect the drinking water supply, encourage redevelopment, and make it easier to expand. It will be a larger section now because so much info is being added. There will be a number of uses that are prohibited now that will be allowed with these new regulations. There will be stricter standards for stormwater treatment and a clear direction for handling of hazardous materials but the uses will be allowed. Preka asked if the change will interfere with growth. Reiner used Cardinal Honda as an example, they currently can't expand but with the new regulations they will be able to.

Cote stated that it is amazing how 1 or 2 people can launch a major change but there wasn't visible quantitative testing. Do we have a water quality problem now? Jones said GU is concerned of salt and increased sediment. Cote states that we have a boundary that appears to be working to protect the water, why the change. Legnos stated that his business has never polluted anything, they do testing regularly and it can be done properly, but the biggest risk is all residential development that isn't regulated. Looking at specific properties there is no way 50 ft. will be adequate. Staff stated that the current zoning regulations are very prescriptive now. Prohibited uses or businesses are allowed to remain or change hands without being required to meet the new regulations. Any new additions or expansion would have to meet the new requirements. Cote stated that property owners need to be informed. Jones suggested bringing people in that will be impacted like Legnos.

Reiner said the next public hearing is May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Reiner said that the EDC can direct business owners to come in and staff will talk to them about their concerns. Cote stated that they need to create a list of what properties are in the WRPD, this needs to be a new priority for business outreach. Jones said to encourage the business owners to come talk to Staff. Bronk said that they needed to bring public awareness. He stated that since it is a text amendment not a map amendment, no public notification is required. Young asked once we get the list what will we do. Bronk stated that direct contact should be made to advise the business of the potential change and that they could be impacted.

Young requested that the EDC receive talking points. Legnos asked if it was appropriate for the EDC to take a stance. Jones suggested a formal motion from the committee would be appropriate and that Staff will work with Bronk to draft a letter.

Reiner said that while they continue with the rest of the regulatory rewrite, Staff will keep the EDC apprised of things.

Business Outreach- Cote reported that they had a meeting on 3/1. The purpose of the meeting was to finalize the categorization of the business that we have in town. Eisenbeiser came up with 11 categories that include 1502 businesses that we have in town. Update the outreach report, and look at how members should select the visits. Cote said that they decided to have each person visit a business in each category. Melin said that they needed to get going and move in a more deliberate direction. He said there is a deficit in certain fields, areas we have gaps. Look at what makes it better for consumers to live here in Groton. Melin suggested reaching out to realtors to ask questions such as why people aren't choosing to live here. Cote suggested allowing the commission to pick from a category. Preka said he doesn't want to start going on the wrong path for the outreach but they have to start. Bronk said there is no real wrong path with business outreach; the wrong path is not doing anything. Speaking to a single owner barber shop could bring valuable info. We do want some sort of strategy

but getting out there is best. Nault stated that having the business list is crucial. The category choices made by the group are as follows: Dowling, recreation/tourism; Legnos will visit a business along 184 and will look at the list; Preka, professional services; Young, agricultural; Melin, finance and real estate;

Dowling left at 6:10

Hatcher stated that she isn't going to participate in this activity at this time. She thinks that the priority focus should be on the watershed issue as they go forward, targeting the businesses that are most impacted so that they may be a force at the May meeting. Mathanool agreed stating that he had very little time to spare.

Preka said that just because they are picking a topic tonight doesn't mean they are leaving the WRPD issue behind.

Groton Utilities had not presented their report before the Zoning update.

Groton Utilities – Groton Utilities report was previously submitted by email for review.

Brooks stated that the 2016 outage statistics were released and that they saw 99.97% service reliability.

Brooks reviewed the infrastructure projects, the 54 million dollar project for the reconstruction and rebuild of the water treatment plant is moving forward. They are looking for grant money, low interest state loan (primary means), and adjustment of water rates to fund the project. Mathanool asked if there is a reason that this needs to happen, Brooks said the plant is from 1940 and does need the work. Brooks stated it is better to do this sooner rather than later, and that putting it off will only make it more expensive.

Brooks spoke about the Micro Grid Grant Application, stating that they are combining resources with Norwich. They will apply for the grant; it is first come first serve. This would mean enhanced distribution daily, and certain strips would be able to be brought back in the event of a hurricane/ catastrophic event. Young stated that if businesses are along that route it would allow the business to continue operation. Brooks stated they were looking along Route 1, Route 12 and eastern point road. They would leverage existing generation to supply critical loads in the event of a long term outage.

The Town of Groton has been changing out street lights and is pretty close to completion in the Eversource territory. GU will begin working to have the same light/lumens in the GU service territory to have an easy transition, looking the same wherever you go.

## V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Liaisons - Young stated that Commissioners have already volunteered for what meetings they will attend and verbiage was given as suggestion as to what to say.

A bulleted report should be written and emailed to Post for inclusion in the agenda packet. Young reported that All Vac in Groton is closing, and Paul's TV closed. Young said we do have a new restaurant operator at the airport, Cafe

511; they have the same fare as they did in their Mystic location but they have a large catering business and were looking for a bigger kitchen.

The question was asked if there were incentives for people to buy an established business (like Paul's TV). Preka stated that most business owners don't list their businesses for sale. Bronk said there are incentives for economic development, it is normal for some businesses to fail, we aren't growing if we aren't gaining some and losing others. Incentives are given if someone wants to start a business that will add jobs and add to the tax base but won't apply to an established business that will have no change.

Hatcher announced that Young was the recipient of the 100 Women of Color Award for her service to the community.

## VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Facebook – table

## V. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 6:42pm was made by Legnos, seconded by Cote; so voted unanimously.

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Dave Cote, Secretary  
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Lauren Post  
Office Assistant II