

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
April 6, 2017 – 4:45 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Cote, Dowling, Hatcher, Preka, Young, Melin, Legnos (4:53), Mathanool (5:08p)
Absent: Denno
Other: Valente, Obrey, Powers, Nault (5:42p)
Staff: Bronk, Eisenbeiser, Post

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:52 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 2, 2017

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the March 2, 2017 meeting

Approval of the minutes was postponed until the April meeting for clarification.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS-

IV. REPORTS

1. Chairperson – Preka meets with Bronk monthly to set the agenda. He participated in selecting the final logos that the public would vote on, and attended budget meetings. Preka reached out to Reiner and asked who Preka should connect with so that he and Melin could become liaisons to the RTM. Reiner provided Scott Newsome’s name. Preka has reached out via email but hasn’t received a response; Obrey said she would look into it. Preka has several failed attempts to meet with the President of the Mystic Chamber and invite them to regular meetings as a liaison; the timing isn’t right at this time.
2. Staff– Staff report was previously submitted by email for review. Bronk thanked those commission members who have helped thus far with the budget. Groton is faced with challenges financially and in light of that people have come to offer support.

Joint Land Use Study – Bronk explained the JLUS and encouraged the commission members to take the survey. 3 members have participated in the survey so far. Young asked if there will be a look at getting revenue from the government property. Staff stated there is a comment section in the survey that can be used for those concerns.

Marketing/Website – Bronk stated that interviews were conducted with website firms and that the committee has narrowed it down to 3 finalists. We are hoping to have a site launched by summer of 2017.

Logo/Branding Contest – Bronk stated that this effort is ongoing. The selection committee narrowed down the entries to 5 logos and 5 slogans to be put out to vote. This digital poll should be available within the next 2 weeks.

CT Next-Innovation Places – The submittal was sent on Saturday to the State. This initiative did gain the support of the Town Council at the March 21st meeting.

Community Wayfinding Signage – Staff conducted interviews and have selected Beta as the desired firm. Bronk will finalize contract negotiations. This will be for a wayfinding signage plan and at this time funding has not been secured for implementation. Bronk stated that they are going to see if we can coordinate efforts with the DOT to see if any funding is available from their I95 sign replacement project.

Tax Increment Financing – The creation of a new TIF Committee was sanctioned by the Town Council.

3. Liaisons:

RTM – Obrey reported that they will begin budget deliberations; Obrey encouraged people to speak at the public hearing. The RTM has the power to restore monies and Obrey hopes that they can do something with the school budget. Obrey stated that every budget is online for review and to bring up any ideas the public may have when speaking. Legnos feels that we are at a breaking point with all these shared services and we need to think hard about cleaning these things up. Obrey suggested that a plan needs to be put in place. Legnos stated leadership needs to happen between both Town and City so they can work together and figure out how to proceed.

Groton Utilities- Brooks reported that Groton Utilities are moving forward with major projects. By unanimous vote the water treatment plan was approved by the city. GU has also publicly announced a partnership with the SUBASE. The energy system improvements at the base are expected to produce a significant annual cost reduction.

Groton Business Association –Valente reported the next GBA meeting is Thursday, April 20th at Survival Systems. The cost is \$8 per person and will begin at 5:30pm. Franz Edson is the speaker. The annual business breakfast update is on May 18th 7:30a at Groton Inn and Suites.

Downtown Mystic Merchants – Valente reported that the DMM, organization called Greater Mystic Visitors Bureau was created to drive tourism. Currently hotel tax is 15% and 0% goes back into tourism. That organization has dissolved but a new committee has been started through the Mystic Chamber. They will look over the issues of tourism and come up with ideas and branding. There was a ribbon cutting at and upscale store in downtown called Curated. May 6th is the downtown spring stroll, May 21st the third or fourth annual half marathon will be held. Four or five thousand people are expected including spectators.

Town Council – Nault reported that the Council is busy going through the budget as well as getting ready for interviews for the town manager position. Oefinger's last day will be June 2nd.

Young left (5:53)

Business Outreach: Preka stated that he reached out to a Cabalbo Accounting located near the old Poquonnock Bridge fire house; they stated they didn't need assistance from the town. Preka said he would like to try and narrow it down to businesses that actually need the help. Dowling asked if we are keeping track of the outreach efforts. Bronk stated we scan and save but no real tabulations at this time.

Legnos visited an Oyster farm; he stated that it may be possible they could help with the state regarding the water quality testing. Testing isn't being done because of interstate laws and it hinders the shipping of the oysters. Currently they have to go to Milford to have the testing done. Nault said that there have been a lot of arguments about why it isn't happening.

Melin stated that we should identify issues to help with growth, housing, addressing the water level, taxes etc. Cote stated next step was trying to address the WRPD. Many of the businesses that may be affected are tenants and Cote suggested they may not really care or would know this is happening because they don't own the property. The outreach committee narrowed the business list down and found that 8 owners represented 50 businesses.

Bronk stated that staff can't send the letters to the businesses; the EDC would have to send them or go out and visit the businesses leaving the information. Legnos said that no other town has this regulation in place and it gives the perception that Groton doesn't want businesses. Legnos said that we need people to show up to the Zoning Commission meeting and let them know that it doesn't look good for business. Preka suggested that maybe two people go to each of the eight businesses.

Regarding the letter that was presented by staff, Hatcher stated that there isn't discussion of anything measurable, and suggesting to add the last 3 paragraphs from the long version to the short version and stating how many owners or businesses would be impacted. Legnos stated that they aren't going to win unless people show up to the meeting. Melin stated that it is important for the letter to be balanced, that we want to support business and that the environment is important. Cote states there is no quantitative evidence there is even a problem so why make the adjustment. Melin said the onus needs to be on those who are pushing for the buffers asking them to explain why.

Cote asked if the commission members are interested in tackling the business owners. Legnos suggested reworking the letter presented and once it is completed present it to the businesses. Preka said we need to have an action plan and believes a visit to the businesses is needed. Melin suggested that we might have a special meeting for businesses where we talk about WRPD and invite businesses.

Valente has a database with name/phone/email that he will send to Post to forward along to the commission. He will also connect with Bailey and they will draft a letter and send it out to their members.

Legnos made a motion allowing the chair to rewrite the letter with staff, Dowling seconded.

Melin stated that he is concerned about the framework and offered to help with the letter, to which they all agreed.

Motion passed 7-0-1, 1 abstention (Melin).

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Facebook – Preka wanted to discuss Facebook. The commission members do a lot of outreach and asked if the EDC should have its own page. Preka thinks that it is the best way to put out the information. Hatcher asked about the level of confusion it may give for people to see two pages, one for EDC, and one for the town's economic development department. Nault suggested that if you name it Economic Development Commission that should be enough to distinguish the two. Preka said they would use it to promote we will promote what they are doing/
Eisenbeiser stated that the Town Manager brought department managers together regarding social media

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Budget – Preka asked for support from the commission during RTM regarding making Post's position full time instead of part time.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 6:53 pm.

Dave Cote Secretary
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Lauren Post
Office Assistant II