

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
May 5, 2016 – 5:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Town: Dowling, Preka, Young, Mathanool, Cote, Hatcher, City: Auerbach,
Hedrick, Hodge, Alves, Keeler, Melin
Absent: Vignato, Legnos
Other: Obrey, Valente, Nault, Bailey
Staff: Town: Bronk, Eisenbeiser, Post, City: Goodrich

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES April 7, 2016 meeting

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

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

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS-

Town Police Chief Fusaro was behind schedule due to a training session and will address the commission upon arrival.

IV. REPORTS – Town

1. Chairperson – Chair’s report was previously submitted by email for review. Preka stated he meets with Paige consistently and is in touch with other members of the commission via email throughout the month. Preka stated the “Meet and Greet” at the “Get to Know Your Groton” event was successful. Preka said he felt that the attendance was good at the SWOT meeting SeCTer organized. Preka said that Bronk and Reiner have done a great job with the presentations of the department budget to this point.
2. Strategic Planning Subcommittee – Preka asked if there was a report regarding the subcommittee for the task force for the Economic Assistance Fund. Bronk said they haven’t met yet but will in the near future.
3. Staff –Staff report was previously submitted by email for review. Bronk stated that he was happy to have Sam Eisenbeiser on board and went on to explain Eisenbeiser’s role and the projects he would be working on as the Economic Development Specialist.

Bronk spoke of the Department budget stating Monday, May 9th will be pivotal as they go before the full RTM. The money they are requesting will be for a complete rewrite of the zoning regulations, a standalone Economic Development website, community signage (gateway/destination signage), etc. Young asked if it was helpful to speak to individual items or support the whole budget as she will email the full RTM. Bronk said requesting the whole budget is helpful.

Final deliverables on Zoning/Market analysis are expected any day. Staff provided their comments to the consultants and the expectation is a near perfect final document.

Staff is finalizing a contract with Great Blue Research to develop a survey. This survey will be given to consumers and businesses to help identify individual preferences which will complement the market analysis data. Bronk asked for the EDC's help with names/phone numbers of about 100 businesses. Hodge stated that she forwarded that info and could provide it again.

Airport Development Zone- Bronk stated Eisenbeiser is working on this with CERC. Mathanool asked if the shape has changed at all. Bronk stated that it is a two-step process, they need to complete the application and then will work on adjusting the shape of the zone.

I-95 Signage- CTDOT is replacing all signs on I-95 from New London to the RI border. Staff is working with CTDOT regarding the signage, specifically Exit 89 and referencing Mystic. Melin suggested it be beneficial that the City advocate what the Town wants and the Town advocate for the City. Goodrich said the City Mayor has to sign off on City requests and the Town Manager has to sign off on the Town's request but that it is helpful for everyone to advocate for each other.

Bronk noted 45 recorded correspondence with businesses in April. One of these inquiries was a national hotel chain who is looking to locate in Groton as they feel there is good opportunity. Bronk and Eisenbeiser met with them recently. Mathanool asked for that the spreadsheet for monthly business contacts be made available and Bronk agreed to provide this.

Preka reiterated the importance of advocating for a change in the signage at Exit 89.

4. Liaisons:

Groton Business Association – Bailey provided the GBA update. The Annual Business Update will be held on Thursday May 19th from 7:30 am – 9 am. They have a dynamic group of panelists and she encourages people to attend as it is all relative information. People can register at www.grotonbiz.com.

The GBA is hosting the Groton New London Airport Open House and Walking Tour on Friday, August 19th. They will have an open house and walking tour from 10 am – 1pm and an evening event from 6 pm - 9pm titled Air and Sea Celebration recognizing the contribution to SubCen events.

The April meeting held at Mystic Noank Library was successful. Donald Poland was the speaker and was very interesting. The June meeting will be at Liberty Bank with Jon Reiner as the guest speaker.

They will continue to work on strategic planning. Cote stated that he read that over the next 10 years EB plans to invest 1.5 billion in the area he ask if anyone know the breakdown of how that money will be spent and if not we should try

to find out as much as possible about what will be spent in Groton. Bailey stated there is a Q & A section during the Annual Update and it is a perfect time for those questions.

Downtown Mystic Merchants – Valente explained who the Downtown Mystic Merchants is comprised of and what they do.

The Downtown Spring Stroll is this Saturday, May 7th from 10 am – 7 pm. The Mystic ½ Marathon is on May 15th beginning at the Old Mystic Village. For each runner there will be approximately 2.3 spectators which is a great boost for businesses. The 2nd annual Sharkfest Swim is going to be held on July 9th.

Valente said there is good news economically speaking. 6 of the 8 empty store fronts have been leased in downtown Mystic and they are finally rebuilding Central Hall which burnt down in 2000. They are really trying to drive tourism. Community signage is great but they really need a tourist booth. They are still looking for a home for an information booth. They took a wall out in Old Mystic Village for this purpose as people still like a paper brochure. Preka told Valente to contact him as he might have space on his porch that may work.

Valente spoke about the I-95 signage; visitors come to the Seaport/Aquarium and stick close to those areas without wondering into Downtown Mystic or Groton. Bailey wants to reiterate that when they have all of these events people are looking to eat or shop and that will all happen in Stonington and not Groton without these signs. Auerbach suggested that it is explained at Town Council that exit 90 is Stonington not Groton the way Valente and Bailey explain it tonight and the impact that has on businesses.

Town Council – No report was submitted

MOTION: To accept the reports presented

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

Chief of Police for the Town of Groton, Louis Fusaro spoke about the goings on in the Police Department. He has been with the department for 10 months and he sees positive things with PD. Fusaro stated it is a great department. Fusaro says they are engaged with the community. He made a commitment to do more with community policing to get officers out of the building. IT has provided infrastructure in the Downtown Mystic Police Office (by the restrooms on Water Street), Navy Housing, and in the old Fitch Middle School allowing the cops to get out in the town where they can do paperwork, out in public. This puts the officers in the community and also helps with quicker response times to calls. Fusaro spoke of the change in the look of the cruisers and uniforms that will be coming. His goal is to make everything more functional.

Hodge asked about the drug issue, specifically the heroin issue that has recently made headlines. Hodge asked what the plan was as the issue directly affects quality of life. Fusaro says that they are working alongside other community departments. They have dedicated officers to find the drugs, arrest the people distributing them, and the most difficult part is finding people the help they need. He states that the enforcement part is easy, but getting people the help is difficult. They work closely with Joe and Tammy

de la Cruz to get people the help they need. Fusaro said there have been daytime robberies and prostitution which are direct links to drugs. He wants to make people feel safe and the task force will address these things. Fusaro stated the people who use drugs don't care where they get the drugs or commit a crime, Police Officers and surrounding Towns need to make it equally inconvenient for them to do so.

Fusaro asked how they are doing and what can they do better. Young said having the different locations is good and she appreciates the working relationship with the airport. Preka stated that he is a volunteer Fire Fighter and works alongside the Police Officers and stated the Officers seem more positive.

V. REPORTS – City

1. Chair – Suggested that the Town and City hold a Special Meeting at an alternative time instead of during the Town's regular meeting. Melin spoke of his background as he has only been the Chair of the EDC for a couple of months.

He stated there are 2 issues that need to be worked on, Thames Street, and the 5 Corners area. They should approach the vision of where they are headed and partner with Groton and New London to fix things to have a better quality of place in other parts of the City off the water. Really look at how we help each other.

There has been a lot of activity with the Heritage River Park. They are in the early stages of a project to create a path to promote the Town/City. This will be both on paper and an app of what people will see when they come across the river. They really want to make a great first impression. Dowling says the Town EDC is fully supportive in uniting to work toward the same efforts. Nault agreed saying with the Groton Town Council some of their goals are Thames Street, 117, Airport Development, Route 1, etc. They want to work on Thames Street area because the potential is huge for Economic Development. Hodge asked if the Market Analysis shows that, Bronk said there isn't strong language in the actual document but it was hugely discussed professionally and the consultants spoke strongly that Thames Street was hugely underdeveloped.

Melin proposes that they have another meeting outside of their regular meetings. Preka agreed that we pick another date and time for a meeting. Preka stated he supports One Groton, he works in both the City and the Town and wants to help both. Hodge suggested that if there is a topic/project to work on they can form subcommittees to work together.

2. Subcommittee – No report
3. Staff – No report
4. Liaisons – No report

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Strategic Planning- This item was postponed for special meeting

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. EDC Social Media (EDC Facebook, EDC Web) – this item was postponed for special meeting

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 7:12 pm made by Dowling, seconded by Cote, so voted unanimously.

Catherine Young, Secretary
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Lauren Post
Office Assistant II