

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

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Dowling, Preka, Melin, Legnos, Mathanool, Brooks, Hatcher (5:35)
Absent: Young, Cote,
Other: Nault, Valente, Obrey
Staff: Eisenbeiser, Post

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:58 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 2, 2017

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

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

April 6, 2017

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the April 6, 2017 meeting

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

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS- None

IV. REPORTS

1. Chairperson – Preka attended the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce Grand Opening at their new location. He thought it was well attended and thanked those who attended from the EDC. Preka also attended the GBA annual business breakfast, he felt that was well attended and very informative. Preka also had a meeting with Peggy Roberts, President of Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce. Preka continues to maintain communication with Bronk throughout the month.

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

Marketing/Website – Staff has selected a preferred firm and is in the process of getting under contract with Golden Shovel. A kickoff meeting was held and a target launch of the new website is expected in fall 2017. Eisenbeiser stated that the website will be a great tool for outreach to new and existing businesses as well as the community.

Logo/Branding Contest – The contest is now closed. The selection committee has reviewed the results and selected the winning logo and slogan. The concept is currently being rendered and will be brought to the town council.

CT Next/Innovation Places – Groton was a selected finalist for funding. Staff participated in a tour on May 12th. Revisions to the proposal were made based on comments and submitted.

Wayfinding Signage – BETA was selected as the preferred firm. The objective is to come up with a master plan to have unified signage throughout Groton to address basic needs. The goal is to have a tiered plan to know what the high priorities are. Once complete we will have a town wide plan as well as designs of the signs. At this time we don't have the budget for the actual signs.

3. Liaisons:

Groton Business Association – Valente reported that the GBA annual business update went well as far as content and speakers but they were disappointed with attendance. Valente stated regarding EB there is nothing but good news to speak of.

Downtown Mystic Merchants – Valente reported that DMM is an events driven organization. Most recently they had the Spring Stroll and the Mystic Half Marathon.

Groton Utilities – Brooks stated that the Water Treatment Plan rebuild is on schedule. The Walker Hill tank replacement has been approved by the town and is on schedule as well. The tank will have 33% larger capacity. Brooks stated that the annual hydrant flushing began on 5/30/2017. GU earned the Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) designation from the American Public Power Association for providing reliable and safe electric service. GU was one of 42 public utilities, nationwide, to receive the Platinum Designation. Work has continued on the three community solar gardens on route 12. Groton Utilities is working with EB on a new 8000 sqft building that is being constructed to provide power and sewage to the building.

Town Council – Nault reported that the mill rate will be set at the June 6th meeting, taxes are going up. They have not heard anything more from the state as far as money is concerned. The new town manager has been hired; John Burt will start on July 5th. Oefinger will stay approximately one week for transition.

RTM – Obrey reported that the RTM worked very hard during budget time, they always had a quorum. Some departments have been cut to the max, Obrey anticipates they may come back looking for additional funds and they may have to revisit. Obrey stated it would be a difficult year.

Business Outreach - Preka stated it is very important to continue business outreach. The commission should be supportive of businesses bringing any issues to Paige or Sam, keeping the momentum going. Businesses need to know that the EDC are there. Melin stated he felt that there was a lack of a strategy. He said a few meetings ago everyone took a sector and asked if the plan was for each of them to reach out to businesses in that sector or if there was another purpose. Legnos stated it is mainly to let people know someone cares, letting them know that their business is appreciated in town. Dowling asked if Melin had a suggestion on how they should proceed. Eisenbeiser suggested that since we have the subcommittee that Cote should schedule a meeting and the

subcommittee should discuss the next steps for outreach. Legnos suggested that at this time it might be helpful to inform businesses about what is going on as far as the taxes are concerned. When the tax bills come out there will be surprises. Preka said that any type of outreach is important, at least a phone call if not face to face. Preka thinks now is a good time because people may be nervous about the future.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. General Discussion –

Bronk drafted a memo and submitted it to the Zoning Commission for the May 31st special meeting. The submission included maps and tables to address the question posed to the EDC after the EDC expressed their concerns of the impact at the May 3rd public hearing. Bronk reported the number of businesses that would be impacted with the change in the Water Resource Protection District. Originally when staff looked at the number of businesses impacted, the non-disturbance area was defined as the buffer areas around all wetlands. In the interim, the non-disturbance area definition was changed to be applicable only to wetlands associated with State-classified sensitive watercourses. Once the definition was changed, a smaller subset of parcels and businesses were estimated to be impacted. Legnos asked if it included watercourses that were dry most of the time unless we get significant rain fall. Eisenbeiser stated that it was state classification that is the relevant issue, not seasonality. Legnos suggested that the map doesn't show the part-time watercourses and that the new regulations will include the part time wetlands. Eisenbeiser discussed how many businesses would be affected. This information was included in the memo Bronk sent to the ZC. Currently, the ZC is in deliberations based on the comments that they received. Legnos stated that they speak about two large industrial parcels but it is potentially many more based on internal subdivisions. The information is misleading. Dowling asked when we would be hearing back from ZC. Eisenbeiser said sometime this month, possibly at a special meeting. Eisenbeiser said that Kim Cardinal of Cardinal Honda expressed her concerns directly to the ZC.

Nault stated that they will combine planning and zoning commissions at a June 20th public hearing. This is expected to streamline the process. One commission will be dissolved and they will select which members will serve on the new combined commission.

2. Facebook – Preka stated that social media is everything. He feels that the EDC should have a Facebook page unrelated to the Town. Preka said that there are many benefits of having a Facebook page stating it could boost attendance from the public at meetings. Eisenbeiser said he was part of a steering committee and that IT is responsible for those platforms since the information is coming from a town source. They are trying to develop protocol and follow best practices. Eisenbeiser suggested they should check against IT's approval process.

Mathanool asked if OPDS has a page, Eisenbeiser stated that we currently use the town's page. We are looking into having a separate Facebook page for the Economic Development Division of the town but we will begin by piggy backing on the town page. Eisenbeiser suggested that the EDC can bring items to Staff to post. Preka stated that Bronk had checked with IT and that the EDC

could have their own page. Nault stated that you have to post regularly and she feels that they are all really busy and might not have time to devote to the page. Preka said that he would be very active in managing the page. He knows it is a lot to learn but he is willing to set up the page and ad admins as needed. He is looking for peoples thoughts. Valente suggested using the GBA's Facebook page, Valente could make Preka an admin, the GBA already have followers and businesses on their page. The DMM have a page and have paid staff who manages their page. Preka wants to make sure the EDC has a place to post. Mathanool suggested using the town's page as a starting point and branch it out later. Preka asked if anyone would be opposed to having their pictures posted or taking a video during a meeting to post. Hatcher said it might be prudent to know the content, what the mission is, what they are trying to accomplish, what they are intending to post monthly, weekly, daily, etc. Hatcher doesn't see the value of having a Facebook page strictly for the EDC. Mathanool thinks it is a good idea to have it and suggested that they take a vote. Preka stated that they are doing outreach and this would elevate that.

Dowling (5:55p)

Preka also noted that if you want to get something posted an article, announcement, picture, etc. and have to send it through email to town staff or to the GBA it could take a day or more to get it posted. Preka would like the EDC to be able to promote things parallel to others and get information out quickly. Mathanool said that the content will grow along with the audience as long as they are putting the information out there. Legnos stated he was fine with having the page.

Legnos made a motion to check with the town and if approved create an EDC Facebook page, Mathonool seconded; so voted unanimously.

Mathanool (5:58)

VI. NEW BUSINESS

V. ADJOURNMENT

1. No quorum at 5:58p

Dave Cote, Secretary
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Lauren Post
Office Assistant II