

MINUTES  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
June 2, 2016 – 4:45 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Dowling, Preka, Young, Cote, Hatcher, Mathanool (5pm)  
Absent: Vignato, Legnos  
Other: Obrey, Valente, Nault,  
Staff: Reiner, Bronk, Eisenbeiser, Post

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:50 p.m.

Hatcher stated that per Roberts Rules of Order the Agenda should be approved at the start of each meeting.

MOTION: EDC will approve the agenda at the start of each meeting.

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

MOTION: To approve the agenda for the June 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES May 5, 2016 meeting

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the May 5, 2016 meeting as amended.

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

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS-

David Madacsi, Professor of Physics at UCONN Avery Point spoke about the potential closing of the Alexey von Schlippe Art Gallery located in the Branford Mansion at the Avery Point campus. Madacsi gave history of the Branford Mansion as well as the Alexey von Schlippe Art Gallery. At this time the Gallery is scheduled to end operations at the end of July with the final exhibit opening June 10<sup>th</sup>. The gallery is scheduled to close due to budget limitations as the single salary is being cut. Madacsi asked for the EDC's support. Cote asked what the salary was of the position being cut. Madacsi stated that it was \$72,000 with approximately an additional \$20,000 added for benefits. Dowling asked if the position could be part time. Madacsi said they can look at reinventing themselves. Nault added that the Town Council has endorsed this, and the Manager has written a letter to the state. Madacsi stated that the City of Groton and the City of New London have offered support opposing the closure of the gallery as well.

MOTION: For the EDC to write a letter of support for the Alexey von Schlippe Art Gallery

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

Jon Reiner – Reiner gave an overview of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). The POCD should be done every 10 years. The town has received an extension from the state. Reiner stated that it is available to view on the town website, library, and we have copies that can be signed out at the Town Hall Annex. The Planning Commission will have a meeting on June 29<sup>th</sup> at 6:30p where the POCD will be on the agenda for public hearing. Young asked what the next step was after the public hearing. Reiner stated that the POCD could be adopted or there may be comments and it will need to be revised. We can become ineligible for certain funding if the POCD isn't approved by July 1.

Preka thanked Reiner and the EDC will offer support anyway they can.

#### IV. REPORTS

1. Chairperson – Chair's report was previously submitted by email for review. Preka thanked staff for attending meetings and thanked commission members who attend meetings outside of the EDC as they take time out of their busy schedules.  
Preka addressed the brochure encouraging commission members to take brochures and visit local businesses.

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

Bronk extended his appreciation for the major support that was offered by the EDC throughout the budget process. Bronk also thanked Obrey for her support at the RTM.

Great Blue Survey- Staff met with Great Blue Research. Two surveys will be created, one for residents and one for businesses. Staff will be seeking input from EDC members during the question development phase in June.

Airport Development Zone- Communications continue with CERC and Kevin Dillon, the Executive Director and CEO of the Connecticut Airport Authority. Staff is planning on submitting the application to the DECD this summer.

Electric Plug in Vehicle Program- The charging stations are up and running and the Nissan Leaf has been purchased. There are a total of 6 charging stations available. This is a great addition for branding and marketing Groton.

Incentives- Eisenbeiser is working on the incentives. The goal is to make the language and the format user friendly.

Mystic Visitors Information Kiosk and "Pop Up Shop"- We were not able to secure a location downtown for a pop up shop or kiosk this summer. This will be revisited in the future.

Thames River Heritage Park- Staff serves on the transition team for the Thames River Heritage Park, the water taxi will launch on June 10<sup>th</sup>.

I-95 Signage- Adding "Mystic" to the Allyn Street exit (89) was brought to the Town Council, initially this was supported but the decision was reversed at a

second meeting bad on a wave of opposition by residents of the town. Comments were sent to the CTDOT regarding the entire signage replacement.

Community Signage- Funds were approved within the budget for community signage. Staff is in the process of developing language for the RFP along with photos and project description for wayfinding and gateway signs.

Valente asked the difference between trail blazing sign vs attraction signs. Bronk states attraction signs are on the interstate, trailblazing would be a directional sign with an arrow. Valente asked if signs on the west would have attraction panels for the Heritage Park, Reiner said they would. Obrey asked if other exits were addressed in the comments sent to the CTDOT, Reiner said the panel signs, wayfinding signs, it has all been addressed.

City of Groton is doing a survey, Preka passed along the survey

3. Liaisons:

Groton Business Association – Valente stated there was no press at the annual business update, the content was rich and it was well attended. Submarine Century banners were sold and will be installed on Bridge St, they are currently in production. The GBA is currently working on Strategic Planning and By-laws for the GBA. GBA publishes the Discover Groton Guide, it is not up to date, Valente would like to work with Paige when putting material together for an updated guide.

Downtown Mystic Merchants – Valente stated Bailey has done a great job with the Air & Sea Celebration. Valente thanked Young for working with Bailey; it is a fundraiser for the Chamber with DMMA as the sponsor.

Young said the day time event is geared towards families, you can touch planes, and tour the facilities. The night time event is a Hanger Party, there will be food, music, and some displays. Tickets can be purchased online at the Mystic Chamber website.

Card racks with Mystic tourist information will be at the Noank Mystic library, Mystic Roasters (old depot), and Bank Square books. There still needs to be a long term solution as people still like paper brochure when planning vacation activities.

The DMM were in full support for the change to the sign at exit 89.

RTM - Subcentury Committee is hosting a picnic on the 21<sup>st</sup> at Washington Park from 4 pm - 7:30 pm.

The RTM has gotten through the budget, Obrey stated it is very important for the EDC to come talk to the RTM about things they are doing during the year. It will go a long way with the RTM. If there is involvement with the RTM more support will be given. Reiner stated there is a place for EDC updates, anyone can go to speak at the RTM and the RTM appreciates when people do.

Preka asked staff to let the commission know when to go, Obrey said anyone can sign in to speak anytime.

Town Council – Nault appreciated what the RTM did during the budget process. Nault mentioned the week long celebrations for SubCen, events can be found on the sub century website.

4. Subcommittee-

Economic Assistance Fund- There is one funding request from Gabriele's for \$37,000 from the Economic Assistance Fund. Bronk briefed the EDC on the program and the request. Since the request was received, an Ad Hoc Task Force was formed to discuss changes needed to the guidelines. The current guidelines state that the application should be referred to the EDC for recommendation. Bronk asked for a motion of support from the EDC. Young asked why the amount Staff is recommending was less than what was requested from Gabriele's. Bronk said he felt the \$24,300 is a true estimate of what is needed based upon provided documentation.

Hatcher said she was not in support of the referral as written/presented. Guidelines state the funding is for public infrastructure. Hatcher said the request did not meet the requirements of the fund and the applicant should submit a more detailed request. Bronk explained that there is \$600,000 in funds that have been allocated to try to assist people who are willing to take risks and create growth and none of those funds have been allocated. Hatcher said they should not spend the funds just because they are there, but should amend the program first.

Reiner explained that the money would not be given up front to the applicant. The construction work would need to be completed and then the applicant would be reimbursed from the fund. Bronk stated that only the infrastructure work would be supported and the protection is that the funds won't be released until the project is done. Eisenbeiser said that we need to get the word out that the funds are available. By approving this it will raise awareness and the funds could then be used effectively, rather than sit in an account that isn't assisting anybody. Mathanool suggested that the commission reassess the document to make sure the EDC is covered effectively. Nault asked if the applicant would be creating jobs with this improvement to the property. Bronk stated some jobs would be created in order to manage the 13 apartments that would be built as part of the project.

Reiner said he appreciated the comments and feedback, but this fund is one tool the town has to aid businesses. The town has given tax breaks to many different sized businesses over the years. This project would increase taxes by \$10,000 once completed, and in 2.5 years that money is paid back and is an increased tax base for the Town.

Hatcher stated she had to leave and will not be present to vote, but wanted it on record that she objected to the funding at this time.

Hatcher left at 6:40 pm

Valente stated the role of the commission was not to pick apart the body of the referral but to endorse the project. Obrey said she hasn't seen anyone use the money because no one have ever approved it, she is happy that the money is

available. Obrey stated that by creating the apartments he will create jobs, bring in more residents and the effect will be people shopping in the area and spending money in Groton.

MOTION: To approve the application with the understanding that the guidelines will be revised for future applications.

Motion made by Young, seconded by Dowling; so voted unanimously. Bronk stated a task force has already been established to revise the guidelines.

Mathanool left at 6:55 pm

The meeting adjourned due to no remaining quorum at 6:56 pm.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Strategic Planning- Top 6 Priorities – No discussion

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. EDC By Laws – No discussion
2. EDC Social Media (EDC Facebook, EDC Web) – No discussion
3. Brainstorming Market Analysis – No discussion

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 6:56 pm due to a lack of quorum.

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Catherine Young, Secretary  
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Lauren Post  
Office Assistant II