

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
July 28, 2016 – 5:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Present: Preka, Young, Cote, Mathanool, Legnos
Absent: Vignato, Dowling, Hatcher
Other: Obrey, Valente, Nault, Smith
Staff: Bronk, Eisenbeiser, Post

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

Comments from Dowling were handed out for review and are included with the minutes. There was no discussion on these items.

Kelly's summary is included with the minutes.

II. ITEM OF BUSINESS

1. Kelly offered a brief introduction and how he would run the workshop. Kelly stated they were going to go through each of the 6 priorities and would talk about what each priority meant to the EDC.

Outreach with Town Council, Commissions, and subdivisions- Legnos felt it was continued communication between staff and commissions, businesses etc. Valente agreed but felt it was important that people regularly speak at different meetings (GBA, RTM, other commissions etc.) and not just attend but be active participants. Mathanool stated that the EDC was supposed to meet with Town Council quarterly but it isn't something they have done, this is something they should do. Staff does meet regularly with Town Council but the commission does not. Mathanool suggested being present at the RTM as well. Nault feels Staff does a great job communicating, she feels there is a lack of cooperation with subdivisions and a disconnect with the city. Cote still has the priorities that pre date the current priorities and isn't sure why business outreach wasn't better defined in their current priorities.

Kelly asked everyone what role they play regarding Outreach. Bronk says the EDC is good with supporting staff with the budget process or any hot button topics. The EDC writes letters of support and does show up to be supportive during necessary times and will speak to show support when needed. Valente suggested changing the first priority "Outreach" to "Communication" within the priorities and have the "Outreach" section refer to outreach with businesses. Legnos stated that staff has done a great job communicating with Council, RTM etc. he suggested one person from the EDC show up to various meetings rotating amongst the commission members. Nault suggested one person go to at least every City EDC meeting, they could rotate all members of the Town EDC. Preka agrees the EDC members are good with supporting Town Council on big things but they need to work more on building relationships with other commissions. He suggested having an EDC liaison to other groups like the EDC has from Town Council, RTM, GBA, and DMMA. Kelly suggested

looking at a calendar to see how many meetings there are, how many members there are and logistically look at how to move forward getting everyone involved in attending meetings.

Take Action on Recommendations in the Market Analysis- Kelly asked how much strategic discussion there was in the group regarding the Market Analysis. Bronk states there are some things they have discussed, like marketing and promotions. The standalone website will be the anchor to launch all marketing; it will be a major effort and Staff will be looking for feedback from the EDC. Young views the item as they would discuss different projects the EDC can assist with once the recommendations from the Market Analysis was completed. The EDC would take the lead from Staff about what things they could do to help and what the priorities are for the things they can help with. Young states they can start to look at these now because they are at that point the Market Analysis process. Regarding not relying on the “Big 3” Valente said GBA is getting the word out to businesses about the incubation centers where we might be able to get some smaller businesses to launch from. Kelly says that more of a shift needs to take place, maybe have a one page marketing piece to get the word out about these incubation centers. Preka thinks that as a group there are great ideas but taking action is what they lack, Preka says once they takeover they need to deliver and need to be consistent.

Cote touched on the monthly management activity, it is better to do a few things and be focused then get lost, and he would like to make a difference in one or two smaller areas then try to tackle many things. Bronk mentioned that there is an action plan in the Market Analysis with priorities listed near projects of high, med, low as a guide.

Develop Business Incentive Portfolio-

Cote stated his impression was that this was the various incentives that are available to businesses. This would include a description as well as the requirements that the businesses must meet to apply for an incentive and who is offering the incentive (the Town, State, etc.). Cote stated that there are many incentives and they then to be confusing. He would like to see a clear document to provide to businesses. It would be best to show an easy read summary of incentives or programs that are offered. This would be helpful in conveying what is out there when doing business outreach. Cote does not feel that the commission would be the ones to develop the portfolio.

Young states that this is on as a priority because it had been discussed over the last 2 years. Initially before the current Staff the EDC thought they would produce this document but now it will be handled on a Staff level. Valente stated that the most common thing mentioned in the Market Analysis was diversification, we need to show what assets we have and what can we offer to businesses looking to expand or come to Groton that sets the Town apart. Legnos states it is also important to understand the business you are dealing with so that you may offer the best incentives for that particular business. Bronk agrees that there are a lot of incentive programs out there and they aren't written in a way that anyone could easily understand. They are generic and staff is trying to translate them to make it easier. Eisenbeiser is currently working on the project. He is looking to make a stand-alone document taking info from other towns, looking at formatting to see what is available and trying to put it into a user friendly document that can be handed out.

Nault is clarifying that what staff is working on and discussing is already established incentives. She interprets this priority as coming up with new incentives to offer. Bronk states that we can try to modify the ones we have control over like the economic assistance fund as an example.

Identify and promote development opportunities in both private and Town owned properties- Cote said that the potential for the Oral School with the right developer and plan could be one of the best opportunities in this area as a tax base for revenue. Bronk says it is the largest property in Groton and currently the Town is not receiving taxes on the property. Mathanool asked how bad the property was in terms of ready to be used, Bronk said it is one of the better ones he has seen. Mathanool had referred a prep school that may be interested. Bronk states that we are keeping a log of interested parties. Young interprets this priority as being similar in priority number three (develop a business incentive portfolio) as a supportive role by the EDC to the OPDS. Kelly asked about the process of identifying, assessing, selling, permitting, and developing within the process and where the best place to bring in the EDC for help is. Young says they could attempt to find interested parties for the properties, Bronk agrees that EDC can help with that.

Bronk says the Town will advertise and put an information sheet out and inform the community so they may understand the process. There is a lot of misinformation and rumors, the EDC can help to mitigate those things and speak to the truths of the process. Young says that they can meet with Staff to inform them of things they hear when they are out and how best to address.

Nault states that infrastructure is a need. We have a lot of properties that are in a prime location but have no infrastructure. Nault suggested the EDC go to a Town Council meeting and recommend infrastructure. Cote has a business in an area that needs infrastructure; in the strategic planning it states this as a top priority. Funds were given for this but with the recession from 2008-2012 the Town wasn't going to put the money towards so it is still something that needs to be addressed.

Cote stated that the priorities have to line up with the strategic goals and plans over the 10 years. Cote stated that when he read in the paper that Electric Boat was going to spend money in this area he immediately asked how much was going to be spent here in our area. It was stated that of the 1.5 billion dollars about a half billion dollars will be spent in Groton during their 5 year plan. Mathanool said for the next 5-7 years the Town should be focused on businesses that support Electric Boat's development and market for the need for businesses to relocate and set up in Groton to support Electric Boat. There will be more revenue from different companies that are technology related with different skill sets. Mathanool stated they should stay focused on that and bring in those ancillary businesses.

Legnos says that south eastern Connecticut doesn't really count in terms of the State, someone from the Town needs to communicate with the State to get more funding for Southeastern Connecticut. The State doesn't have any idea on how to pigeon hole that funding and the Town needs to tap into the manufacturing money. Bronk states that bringing in the businesses is great but if people aren't living in the community then you aren't fully driving the economy. Mixed use development is as important to keep workers here in Groton. The Town has been approached about dealing with Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Young asked what the EDC can do to help with this. Bronk stated Staff needs complete support when bringing this to the Town Council; they can attend Town Council

meetings, promote TIF and link them to developing projects. Nault stated that the vote of support the EDC gave for the Economic Assistance fund for Gabriele's made a difference with the Town Councils vote. They took that into consideration with their own vote so that type of support makes a difference. Bronk needs the EDC to play a similar supporting role that the EDC made during the presenting of the budget when they present TIF. Kelly stated that it should be clarified what questions would come up when speaking about TIF and the process. Bronk said they will educate the EDC on this subject.

Develop Metrics to gauge progress in business development and retention- Young gave the history of how this priority came about. The EDC was trying to come up with a way of measuring how they are doing as a commission, if they are staying on track, a way to track and compare over time. Legnos stated they can look at what was done with outreach. Kelly stated that there are 2 metric outcomes, how did you affect change, and the other metric is doing your job, how many people did you talk to, how many businesses did you visit, how many meetings did you get to during a period of time etc. Legnos states it's the effort that is put in and the results of that effort. Cote stated that they made a difference during the budget and that is something that they can measure. Preka says that their consistency needs to be measured. There needs to be a balance with attending meetings and business outreach and they need to be consistent, consistency is key. Young wanted a roadmap of what was expected or what they would commit to during the month between each meeting. Nault suggested a sheet used to track businesses that were visited or meetings that were attended that are turned in each month. Preka suggested a line item on the agenda each month where the commission members would discuss what they did during the month. Nault and Preka suggested using Doodle for important meetings and business outreach, members can sign up for meetings so everyone will know they are covered or not covered.

Identify how the EDC's discretionary fund can best support OPDS economic development efforts in time to submit a monetary request for the 2016/2017 budget cycle- Kelly offers his opinion that if the EDC does priorities 1-5 that it will result in them doing number 6. Young stated that in the description of the EDC, it states that there is a discretionary fund where funds may be given to the EDC from a percentage on the grand list. It is money that they have to request but it is a state statute that the EDC can use money to support what OPDS needs. Preka states that Bronk requested they submit a budget for the EDC. Young wants it on the agenda to look at creating a budget. Bronk says that Staff has been resistant to this and asked for an itemized budget because without knowing what exactly the money is for funds won't be approved. Bronk also said that his interpretation of the statute is that it was put in place for municipalities that don't have a budget for Economic Development and Groton's Town Council is very supportive of Economic Development allocating the funds that the department felt it needed to be effective. Legnos suggested that if on the new website there was a listing of all the businesses and they can pay to expand how much info is put on there this may be away to have some funds for the EDC.

Kelly asked them to think about their current list of priorities and if there were any changes or additions they felt are important. Cote said he felt that there

should be a one page list based on the Strategic Plan that is done every 10 years to have an idea of what the goals would be in year one, year 3, year 5 etc. Cote wants long term goals. Legnos says it needs to happen continuously, a living document that is used and updated regularly. Kelly suggested that 2 or 3 members meet and brainstorm a list and maybe Cote can take the lead on the topic and bring it to the committee.

Kelly stated that he felt the meeting was productive and suggested doing another workshop in the future. All in attendance were receptive to this.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Catherine Young, Secretary
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Lauren Post
Office Assistant II

Attachments
Comments submitted by Dowling
Workshop Summary submitted by Kelly

Hi David,

I will be unable to attend the first EDC workshop on 7/28. However, Paige suggested I provide some of my thoughts for discussion at the meeting.

Below are a few talking points that I thought might be helpful.

1. I would like to suggest that EDC members commit to circulating the brochure to local businesses during the month and report back to the Commission which businesses they visited so we can note it in our minutes.
2. I suggest that the Commission be included in the discussion as to who we would like to invite to speak at our meetings. This will allow for a wider range of potential candidates and a consensus on the part of the Members.
3. Consider providing a mid year report to the Town Council on what our Commission has done thus far and goals for the second half of 2016.
4. Recommend that the Chair meet with the Town Manager to discuss possible candidates to fill the EDC vacancy.
5. Suggest we review the goals we presented in our Annual Report to the Town Council to determine what we have achieved and what we would like to focus on the second half of year.
6. Suggest that our monthly reports state what members attended meeting during the previous month, i.e., GBA, TC meetings, other Commission meetings, public hearings, Chamber meetings, and events such as Sub Century.
7. Continue to seek suggestions from Paige as to how we can better support the OPDS.

I hope you find these suggestions helpful.

Regards,

Susan



MEMORANDUM

TO: Paige Bronk
FROM: Nathan Kelly, AICP
DATE: August 25, 2016
RE: EDC Meeting Summary

On the evening of July 28, the Horsley Witten Group (HW) facilitated a discussion among the members of the Groton Economic Development Commission (EDC) to help establish goals for the group for 2016-2017 and some “next steps”. The discussion was generally structured around the six goals that were established by the group in the previous year. The following memorandum (revised) is generally organized around those six goals and condenses the discussion into summary points and key observations. A more complete record of the discussion can be viewed in the meeting minutes.

Goal 1: Outreach with Town Council, Commissions, and subdivisions.

Key Observations

- Members of the EDC believe it is their role to attend meetings of the Town Council (TC) to stay connected with what TC is considering, to advocate for initiatives that further economic development, and to maintain general lines of communication.
- Further in the past, there was poor communication, even when it was specifically agreed by TC that there would be quarterly meetings. Conditions related to communications between TC and EDC have improved, but require more work.
- Communications with the other Boards and Commissions is also important and EDC would like to foster relationships with these groups. Representative Town Meeting (RTM) is a particularly important group.
- The EDC would like to foster an all-inclusive relationship with the governmental subdivisions. This will take time and require attendance at meetings.
- EDC has done a very good job at rallying around important issues and making their voice heard on important individual issues. Support for the recent budget items related to the Office of Planning and Development Services (OPDS) is an example of this.
- Lack of regular presence at meetings can create an almost adversarial or competitive atmosphere at TC meetings.
- Communications with the business community should be a core function of the EDC, but has not reached a level satisfactory to EDC members.
- In general, the EDC sees itself as a body that works closely with OPDS to identify important issues and then bolster the efforts of OPDS.

Moving Forward

- Should the EDC have its charge changed so that it is designated to support the TC?
- Staff will develop a calendar for 2-3 months showing all of the meetings that regularly occur amongst Town Boards/Commissions and other subdivisions.
- The group will review the calendar to get a sense of the level of effort that would be required to attend all of these meetings on a regular schedule.
- EDC should also discuss who should be invited to EDC meetings. A draft of a year's worth of possibilities should be identified by the group, matching potential guests/speakers with strategic goals. Staff can follow up on invitations and report back to the EDC

Goal 2. Take action on recommendations in the Market Analysis.

Key Observations

- For many years, the Town was using the “big fish” approach to economic development. The focus was on trying to attract very large corporations that could single-handedly make a significant fiscal and economic impact on the Town. The mindset is changing to one more geared toward small business.
- Diversification within the business community should be the focus for EDC and the Town as a whole.
- Not too long ago, the EDC had listed a few projects that they felt might benefit from their active involvement. This was put on hold for the purposes of the new Market Study. EDC felt that the study should be used to set those priorities.
- The study is only finished recently and the EDC wants OPDS to provide direction on what to focus on in terms of strategies in the document.
- Individual opportunities include the promotion of incubation centers.

Moving Forward

- Staff will continue to take the lead on distilling the results of the study into a series of actionable items.
- The EDC will be asked for input from the private sector, advocacy for funding from the Town, dissemination of information into the community, or other tasks well-matched to their skills.

Goal 3. Develop a business incentive portfolio.

Key Observations

- Part of answering the question of which incentives the Town would offer involves asking “who we are” relative to potential business profile and economic approach. This is a big picture question and could be tied to a new Strategic Plan process.
- In the short-term, the Town is going to focus on the incentives that are already available from the State before investing resources into developing completely new incentives.

- Incentives already offered at the State level are numerous, so it is important that the Town is able to clearly communicate how these might be applied.
- The existing written summaries of State level incentives are difficult to understand.

Moving Forward

- Staff has started the process of summarizing different programs. The products should educate the EDC members but also be something (e.g., flier) that can be distributed to potential new businesses.
- The EDC should consider inviting state-level officials that administer programs to provide “one off” presentations to the EDC. Other boards could be invited as well as the other governmental subdivisions.
- Potential “big idea”: the Town might consider hosting (or co-hosting) a regional summit where state-level economic development agencies provide presentations and take Q&A from members of the private sector and local government officials.

Goal 4. Develop metrics to gauge progress in business development and retention.

Key Observations

- This goal emerged from the recognized need for EDC to be able to quantify and track some of their work. They want some data to be able to answer: “How do we know if we’re doing a good job?”
- Example of a recent achievement showing they are doing a good job is the successful advocacy for the OPDS budget.

Moving Forward

- Discussion about next steps focused on communications (See Goal 1).
- The group would like to create a system that can get members to sign up for meetings and then report back.
- First step is to identify the best electronic scheduling device for this effort. Some members suggested using Doodle polls for all of the meetings. HW notes that TC and RTM meeting schedules are listed on the web and there may be an opportunity to expand this calendar to include all Boards and Commissions.
- EDC could also use one of many proprietary calendar websites that are readily available as a “sign up” mechanism.
- Once an electronic platform is identified, the EDC should be prepared to spend an entire meeting to look at a calendar and discuss how they can REASONABLY optimize their presence at these meetings.
- Municipal staff can serve as the administrator of the process.
- Municipal staff will also keep tally of meetings attended and by whom.
- A line of EVERY agenda for an EDC meeting will be “Communications Report”. At a minimum, each member will quickly report the meetings they attended and any items of interest. Each member will also confirm the meetings they plan to attend in the

coming month. Staff will identify any important gaps or provide information regarding any important issues that may be raised in upcoming meetings.

- A more difficult communications item to schedule is outreach to members of the business community. EDC identified this as a high priority for the group.
- As part of the Communications Report at every EDC meeting, members will also identify which members of the business community they are targeting, and which ones they were able to meet with in the prior month.

Goal 5. Identify and promote development opportunities in both private and Town owned properties.

Key Observations

- The Oral School represents an immediate large opportunity for investment.
- When disposing of municipal property, misinformation is quickly circulated and can harm the process and create unnecessary tension in the community.
- EDC should aspire to be a match maker when the Town considers the sale of municipal land for development.
- Infrastructure can be a limiting factor and the EDC should advocate for infrastructure expansion and upgrade where it will spur investment. A study was done in 2006 that identified many important infrastructure upgrades. The study was all but forgotten during the recession, but it is still relevant and should be brought back into public discussion.
- Municipal staff looks to the EDC to disseminate “good” information about high profile projects or other controversial initiatives. EDC should be viewed as a reliable source of information that will help others make decisions.
- EB has stated that they intend to spend approximately \$500M on Groton-based operations over the next five years. These are just planning-level estimates but provide one of our few solid leads.
- Financing for small businesses is a problem in the community. (If the Town does establish their own local business incentives, should they specifically target small business?)
- We can create an incredible amount of jobs, but if we are not providing opportunity for people to work AND live in Groton, we are not achieving our full economic potential.
- The Town has already been approached for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) project.

Moving Forward

- Groton should do some research on the industries that support EB, as this operation has the potential to create a local/regional “industry cluster”. Industries that support EB may be looking for opportunities to establish local operations in the wake of EB investment.

- The Town should investigate the potential to apply CDBG funds to physical improvements to small business establishments.
- Revisit the 2006 infrastructure assessment to see if it can provide a platform for current planning.

6. Identify how the EDC's discretionary fund can best support OPDS economic development efforts in time to submit a monetary request for the 2016/2017 budget cycle.

Key Observations

- The discretionary fund is something identified by statute as a percentage of municipal funds, which can be accessed through a formal request by the EDC.
- There were differing opinions as to whether this type of request would be a good idea.
- Those who had concerns stressed the fiscally conservative nature of TC. They also stressed that any such expenditure would need a detailed justification/explanation up front.
- Those who were more favorable to the idea stressed that the ability to access these types of funds might help the EDC further its mission, particularly by supporting individual projects.
- It was also noted that OPDS maintains a line item in its budget for supporting the EDC. Currently, this annual figure is \$900.

Moving Forward

- Municipal staff stressed the need for the EDC to develop a budget for its activities.
- Municipal staff suggested, and the TC liaison agreed, that the best way for the EDC to access funding would be through the OPDS budget. This is something that can be more explicitly reviewed annually before budget season.
- When discussing revenue, one EDC member suggested that the upcoming website would have a Business Directory. Listing on such a directory would be free for a basic level of information. Other, more robust listing options would be offered for a small fee. This type of revenue could be used to further the EDC mission.

Summary of Next Steps

- A full meeting (or more) should be dedicated to developing logistics around communication with governmental bodies and major private sector targets. Potential ideas:
 - Project a calendar through PowerPoint that shows all of the potential meetings for Groton and other subdivisions. Prioritize the meetings and potentially assign EDC members to each.
 - Identify the State agencies that steward important incentive programs (e.g., TIF) and determine whether someone can be invited to speak.

- Develop a conceptual invitation list for EDC meetings that spans 6-12 months.
 - Assign one EDC member and one staff member to target EB for a strategic planning meeting.
- Staff will push to develop “cut sheets” that summarize the types of state-level incentives available to local businesses.
- Consider a second strategic planning meeting as a follow up to this July 28, 2016 meeting.