

MINUTES  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
AUGUST 6, 2015 – 4:45 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 1

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Cote, Dowling, Hatcher (4:59 p.m.), Legnos (4:59 p.m.), Mathanool (4:59 p.m.), Obrey, Vignato, Young (4:59 p.m.)

Absent: Preka

Other: Smith, Frink, Valente

Staff: Clarke, Bronk, Gilot

No quorum present at 4:45 p.m.

Chair asked members to advise her and staff in advance if they will not be attending a meeting.

Staff discussed the internal schedule for distributing agenda packets to the commission. A draft will be developed, sent to the Chair for additions or edits The week before the meeting. A request will be sent for committee and liaison reports. The goal is to have the packet sent out to members by Friday. Staff will ask at distribution to let them know if anyone will not be attending.

Frink asked if anyone went to the July 20<sup>th</sup> zoning audit focus group meeting.

Discussion on the July 20<sup>th</sup> Market Analysis and Zoning Audit focus group meeting. Demographic trends, best practices from other communities, mixed uses, use tables, parking design requirements and potential strategies were discussed at the meeting. Some topics from the meeting were to change the lengthy approval process, too many words in the zoning regulations, more tables and illustrations needed, too many zones and layers (overlays), different code types, more form-based recommended, to show what is expected for design on a property. Staff is working with the consultant to ensure we get everything we need. Obrey offered her assistance.

Mathanool, Legnos, Young and Hatcher arrived at 4:59 p.m.

Chairperson Dowling called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Staff introduced Paige Bronk, the new Economic and Community Development Manager for the Town of Groton.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of special meeting of July 9, 2015

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the July 9, 2015 meeting as written.

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

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Carroll Gothie, a resident who owns several properties, addressed the commission regarding her frustrations in dealing with the Fire marshal, Ledge Light, Building Official and the Town Assessor. She expressed her displeasure with the

employees of the town and the processes. She said it has taken three months so far to attempt to obtain a building permit for a use change from an office back to a residential property. As of today, she still has no building permit. She said she cannot rent properties because the town takes months to approve applications.

Frink commented that there are two sides to every story. The commission discussed the issues brought up by Ms. Gothie.

Staff commented that perception is reality, and we need to change perception, and we need to change reality.

The Chair distributed two handouts – “Dark Store Method”, and Groton New London Airport tour on 8/19, National Aviation Day.

#### IV. REPORTS

1. Chairperson – Chair’s report was previously submitted by email for review.
2. Strategic Planning Subcommittee – no meeting, no report

Staff – The staff’s report was emailed to the Commission prior to tonight’s meeting for their review. Staff provided brief updates on activities: the interviews for the market analysis, discussed commuter rail with Senator Blumenthal; Thames River Heritage Park and attendance at a retail trade show in Boston. Cote is delighted with the town’s attendance at trade shows. Bronk said that is something the town is more interested in but funding is limited so staff must be very selective. Other outreach strategies, including direct outreach to businesses; trade shows; promotions through website, brochures were discussed. Vignato said most growth of tourism and recreational businesses will come from within driving distance of this town.

Obrey left at 5:43 p.m.

3. Liaisons

Groton Business Association- The GBA report was emailed to the commission prior to the meeting for their review. Valente briefly reviewed their support of the Thames River Heritage Park, Downtown Mystic Merchants, and an upcoming Sharkfest event.

Downtown Mystic Merchants – A report was distributed and updates were given.

Town Council – Frink said he attended the July 20<sup>th</sup> zoning audit focus group meeting, discussed previously.

MOTION: To accept the reports presented.

Motion made by Hatcher, seconded by Legnos, so voted unanimously

#### V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Market Analysis and Zoning Audit Update

It was requested that the PowerPoint presentation and the GMTV link from the July 20<sup>th</sup> focus group meeting be emailed to the commission members.

Cote asked if the consultants using the SEDP from 2006. The priorities established then have gone nowhere.

Young asked if the market analysis will it be discussed with commission, and will the attitude of town employees be included. Bronk said no. Customer service will be addressed with streamlining, one stop permitting. Young said she would like to see a recommendation as to how employees conduct themselves with the public. A customer service survey is needed. Hatcher said they need to reframe the work culture in government, with clear expectations and processes.

A questionnaire for businesses leaving, or may want to leave, should be established. This could be an ambassadorship opportunity.

## 2. Strategic Planning

The Top 6 priorities were established a couple of months ago by the commission.

The commission asked how they could assist staff with the available properties listing. Staff suggested that commission members could assist with keeping the property listing page "fresh" by sending photos or emails or info for rent/sale signs in town.

The commission discussed what incentive programs are available. The commission discussed forming a subcommittee or facilitated workshop to provide assistance or recommendations for business incentive portfolio efforts. It was noted that many local businesses would be happy to assist new business owners in town.

The commission said identifying funds that may be available from a discretionary fund needs to be submitted in November. The commission should begin preparing a presentation on the EDC's priorities and goals for the Council.

MOTION: Staff will draft a letter on behalf of the EDC chair to Ms. Gothie acknowledging and recognizing her concerns and requested that staff look into her situation.

Motion made by Hatcher, seconded by Legnos, motion passed unanimously.

## VI. NEW BUSINESS

### 1. Other Business - None

Staff will send another copy of the Top 6 priorities of the EDC. A workshop will be set up soon to begin work on the priorities.

The Chair reminded commissioners to advise her or staff if they will not be able to attend a meeting or if they will be late. Meetings start at 4:45 p.m.

## VII. ADJOURNMENT

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Motion to adjourn at 6:31 pm made by Legnos, seconded by Cote, so voted  
unanimously

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Lian Obrey, Secretary  
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot  
Office Assistant III