



Town of Madison, CT

Economic Development Commission

Draft

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on January 13, 2022, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Videoconferencing

Present: Commissioners Ryan Duques, Matt Bloom, Anne Foley, Lisa Miksis, Mark Steffen, Jonathan Stein

Also present: Bruce Wilson, Board of Selectman; Sheri Cote, Economic Development Director; Bill Stableford

Mr. Duques called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes of regular meeting November 18, 2021. On motion made by Dr. Stein, and seconded by Mr. Bloom, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 18, 2021 as submitted.

2. Public comment. Mr. Stableford noted that he is available to provide fact-based information on the Community Center project if members of the EDC have any questions. Since he is no longer a Town Official he is able to speak on this project during the quiet period.

Selectman Wilson explained that the quiet time is a period, before a vote on a Town project, where Town Officials are not to advocate for or critique a project under consideration. Members of the Economic Development are Town Officials so cannot speak on this project as a representative of the Commission although they can speak as an individual citizen.

Mr. Duques noted that the presentation on the project provided on January 5th had been available to view on you tube but is no longer available. Selectman Wilson agreed to look into why this public meeting is no longer available.

Mr. Duques suggested that for future projects, the EDC should be invited to participate in discussions to provide input on any economic development components of a project.

Mr. Duques noted that at the last EDC meeting, Dr. Cooke had provided a presentation on the School Renewal Plan that was very informative. He had a follow up meeting with the Superintendent with a number of questions, related to his presentation, which were answered by Dr. Cooke in an e-mail. Mr. Duques shared Dr. Cook's response with the Commission members in an e-mail sent earlier today. The Commission members agreed that Dr. Cooke's responses

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should be included as a part of the minutes of this evening's meeting. These notes are attached to and made a part of these minutes as Attachment 1.

In response to a question, Selectman Wilson noted that the Island Avenue School sale will be one of three questions on the referendum.

3. Discussion: School Renewal Plan Proposal. There could be no discussion on the School Renewal Plan Proposal since this project is currently in the quiet time when Town Officials cannot advocate for or critique a project under consideration

4. Discussion: Community Center Plan Proposal. There could be no discussion on the Community Center Plan Proposal since this project is currently in the quiet time when Town Officials cannot advocate for or critique a project under consideration

5. EDC Director Update. Ms. Cote provided an update on her activities as EDC Director as follows:

- She has been immersed with the mask and test kit distribution to businesses. Today items were distributed out of the EDC Office and there will be another distribution from Town Hall. Businesses have been very appreciative to receive these important supplies from the Town
- Madison welcome two new businesses including Chase Bank and JMcLaughlin
- Madison hosted a Meet and Greet Event for the State Attorney General
- She spent time working with John Michael Parker on the topic of tourism
- She is continuing to visit local businesses and work with the Chamber of Commerce
- She started a face book page called "Visit Madison" She will be taking photographs to include on the page. Dr. Stein noted that there are a number of local photographers who might be interested in providing their work in exchange for credit.
- She is developing a business data base
- She set up a system using the Town's service to be able to send out informational e-mail updates

Ms. Cote noted that the 2022-23 EDC budget was submitted at its current level of \$13,979.

Items included in the budget are Chamber Membership and the web cam at the Library.

Mr. Duques noted that other items include REX and the recording Secretary.

Mr. Duques noted that the EDC usually plans to complete a special project initiative each year and recent ideas discussed focused on enhanced signage including lighting. He suggested that the Commission members discuss ideas for next year's initiative at the next EDC meeting. Part of the discussion should include talk on the long-term role of the EDC in initiating and planning.

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Mr. Duques asked Ms. Cote to share any initiatives being pursued by Guilford that might be of interest to pursue in Madison. Ms. Cote noted that Guilford is working on a signage project with private fund raising. They have also hosted breakfasts with the business community, sponsored business awards and funded memberships to organizations related to economic development.

Dr. Stein commented that the Light Up Madison Project was a very successful creative idea that was initiated by the Economic Development Commission. He suggested that thought be given to developing a similar idea or project that the EDC works to start-up and then encourages the Town to take it on as it grows. These types of projects are very positive for the community and place a good focus on Madison. Perhaps the Light Up Madison idea could be expanded to include a Winter Festival of events. Ms. Cote noted that John Matthews had approached her about an idea to take Light Up Madison to another level that includes a festival similar to the event held in Nantucket.

Ms. Cote noted that the EDC has the ability to appoint a representative to serve on the new Marijuana Committee. Selectman Wilson noted that the goal of the Committee is to look at issues surrounding the recent legalization of marijuana including public policy, public education as well as the business side of growing and retail. Youth and Family Services and the schools will be involved on the Public Safety side of this discussion. There will also be a HR liaison to consider any regulations regarding Town employees. The Committee will be asked to provide the Board of Selectmen with a recommendation on a policy to enact and actions to take regarding marijuana. Mr. Steffen agreed to represent the EDC on this Committee.

Ms. Cote noted that a developer came in to talk about the parcels of land near Hammonasset by Cohen's Bagels. The developer is interested in pursuing a multi-family project in the Hammonasset District which is zoned commercial. She requested EDC input on this idea and asked if there would be any interest in doing a study of this part of the Town. This information would be helpful as the developer decides if he should move forward with a request for a multi-family project in a commercial zone.

Mr. Steffen recommended further review and research into this area because he believes action might have been taken in this area previously that could have an impact on this proposed project.

Dr. Stein questioned if the Commission is being asked to endorse the idea of this project or to support a study on allowing multi-family development in the commercial zone? Mr. Duques noted that he would support the idea of a study rather than action at this time. He suggested that the Town Planner be advised that the EDC would be interested in working with Planning and Zoning to conduct a study and research policies on this topic in other towns.

Mr. Steffen noted that he believes that, as per present policy, residential units are permitted in a commercial zone as long as they are not on the first floor.

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6. Old business. There were no items discussed under old business.

7. New business. Mr. Duques noted that it is time to act on the election of officers and he would prefer to have another member take on the position of Chairman. Dr. Stein agreed to serve as Chairman if nominated.

On motion made by Ms. Foley, and seconded by Mr. Steffen, the Commission voted unanimously to elect Dr. Jonathan Stein as Chairman of the Economic Development Commission.

On motion made by Mr. Duques, and seconded by Ms. Foley, the Commission voted unanimously to elect Lisa Miksis to serve as Vice-Chairman and Mark Steffen to serve as Secretary of the Economic Development.

Ms. Foley noted that Justin Murphy had provided some good notes and suggestions on Light Up Madison in a January 12, 2022 e-mail to Commission members. The Commission members agreed that this e-mail should be included as a part of the minutes of this evening's meeting. These notes are attached to and made a part of these minutes as Attachment 2.

Selectman Wilson noted that, after the budget process if completed, the Board of Selectmen will be taking up the topic of short-term rentals, which is a topic that has an economic development component so they would like to hear the Economic Development Commission's perspective on this topic. There has been talk about setting up a Committee but he feels it would be better to study this item in-house. The item has come up in light of the recent popularity of short-term rentals with the assistance of on-line businesses such as Airbnb. In response to a request by Dr. Stein, Selectman Wilson noted that there are currently no policies or ordinances that deal with the topic of short-term rentals. The Selectman hope to come up with a policy that will satisfy the residents on both sides of this issue.

Mr. Steffen commented that the concerns about this topic have arisen because some residents might have decided to purchase a house in a neighborhood that is not a tourist area and if a nearby home is being used for short term rental activity, they might find this activity inconsistent with the neighborhood and object to this use.

10. Adjournment. On motion made by Dr. Stein, and seconded by Mr. Duques the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Terry Holland-Buckley
Clerk

ATTACHMENT 1: Contents of January 13, 2022 E-Mail between Dr. Cook and Ryan Duques:

Below is some follow up information that Dr. Cooke sent related to his presentation at the last EDC meeting.

Thank you so much for your time presenting your well-thought-out plan to EDC.

We will be discussing the plan at this week's meeting and I wanted to ask if you have any data on:

1. Is there any information on return-on-investment in schools to the community? i.e. for every dollar that is invested, a community sees (dollars, jobs, quality of life, etc.)?

While there is data regarding school programs, such as \$1 investment in preschool returns \$11 in benefit (other studies have shown up to \$13 and \$15 dollars), I have not seen the direct connection on the school budget. We all know that additional staffing in the schools would lead to more jobs in the area however MPS has been decreasing staff due to declining enrollment. I don't believe that the reductions have been enough to impact overall jobs in the area.

Do you have any other economic impact data on schools, impact on property values, impact on community desirableness, etc.

Again, mostly anecdotal as we shared at the meeting. We heard from realtors who feel they are competing with area towns who have a brand new high school. We've pointed out that ours is only 20 years old and has provided benefit to the district for that time. The outward appearance of our elementary schools has been mentioned as a concern. This project addresses that and Polson's lack of AC. As well as adds to Brown School. In short, we feel a new elementary school (and there are very few new elementary schools on the shoreline) will increase that attractiveness of MPS. Other investments the Board has made on security and technology also have impact as well.

We also heard about academic results. Madison had success on standardized measures this past school year achieving gains where others saw sharp decreases. Many reports are on hold or lag a few years. Eventually increased results on standardized measures will increase the attractiveness of our schools to those looking at state reports/other marketing reports, such as Niche.

Finally, as discussed during the meeting, the Academy building and its \$16M price tag will also be on the referendum (planned). Does the BOE or central office have any insight on how that project would be synergistic to the school renewal plan? Is there a plan by the administration to use the Academy building if it becomes a community center?

We view the academy building project as greatly benefiting youth in town thereby positively impacting our schools. We see connections such as afterschool programming and MYFS programs for

students. Also the gym space figures to be popular among students and families. We could see holding smaller events because of its great location. A way to connect the two elementary schools in town in one location.

ATTACHMENT 2: Contents of January 12,2022 E-Mail from Justin Murphy to Commission members

Hi all,

My apologies, but I am on vacation this week so will not be able to join the meeting tomorrow evening.

This may no longer be the purview of the EDC, but I wanted to offer some commentary that may guide us next winter if some scope of downtown holiday lighting is to continue.

The Chamber of Commerce collects \$225 per lamppost on BPR (excluding Wall Street) for sponsorship of the lighted wreaths. There are 20 lampposts on BPR, plus another 25 or 26 on Wall Street. I'd suggest teaming up with the Chamber to add lighted garland around each lamppost pole in addition to the wreaths. Easier to install (i.e. shorter ladder needed) and avoids any issues with restricting tree growth. I'd also suggest the yellow tinted lights similar to the wreaths rather than the bright white used on the trees this year. More traditional and may also alleviate the light pollution concern raised by Paul Sprague at the last meeting.

Lighted garland on lampposts can be seen in neighboring downtowns of Branford, Essex and Old Saybrook. While not as over the top as our display, very tasteful (IMO) and likely more economical and easier to install.

Sorry to be so specific, but wanted to suggest while still fresh in our minds and while others may have had the opportunity to view neighboring communities, or still can. If EDC no longer involved, let me know and I will forward to BOS.

Thank you!

Justin Murphy
Board of Finance