



# Town of Madison, CT

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## Economic Development Commission

Draft

Minutes of a special meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on January 14, 2021 via Zoom Videoconferencing

Present: Commissioners Ryan Duques, Eric Dillner, Matt Bloom, Jonathan Stein; Mark Steffen

Also present: Dave Anderson, Town Planner; Justin Murphy, Board of Finance; Jerry Davis, Davis Realty

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

1. Approval of minutes of regular meeting December 10, 2020. On motion made by Mr. Steffen and seconded by Mr. Bloom, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of December 10, 2020 as submitted.

2. Public comment. There was no discussion under public comment.

3. Light Up Madison Update and Discussion on Extension. Mr. Duques reported that he has received multiple positive comments on the Light-Up Madison initiative both as public comments and on social media. He also noted that, while the original idea was to sunset the displays at the end of January, there was a conversation with the Chamber of Commerce on whether the display could be extended through February. There would be no expense associated with leaving the lights up through this period. Another idea that would have some cost associated with it is to change some of the lights to red for February as the season of love. The cost to change the color on every third tree would be \$1,000.

In response to a question by Mr. Steffen, Mr. Anderson noted that the only concern that had been brought up was that it would be important to make sure that the lights come down before spring when the trees would grow and having the lights attached could impact their growth.

Mr. Bloom and Mr. Steffen commented that they support the idea of leaving the lights up for additional time, however, do not support the expenditure of additional funds to change the color on a number of the lights.

In response to a question by Mr. Murphy, Mr. Anderson noted that there had been some discussion on funding of approximately \$20,000 for this project next year being included as an

2-Minutes of a meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on January 14, 2021

item in the Board of Selectmen budget as opposed to the joint Board of Selectmen Economic Development Commission funding provided for this year.

Following discussion, Mr. Duques noted that the consensus is to leave the current lights up through February with a plan to dismantle the lights before spring for the benefit of the trees and to encourage the funding of the Light-Up Madison program next year utilizing funds outside of the EDC budget.

4. Bradley Road Project – Davis Realty. Jerry Davis was present to provide an update on his Bradley Road project at the former laundromat site. Mr. Davis provided information on the history of the buildings on the site. Following a review of the Bradley Road Vision Study he developed the idea for the project with an emphasis on enhancing the character of the community. He considered different options for the site including medical, hotel, density and mixed-use as options he believes would enhance the Town. Regardless of each idea, he came up against septic management as an issue. When the State recently increased the amount of septic capacity that could be administered locally, he decided to move forward with proposing an apartment building project. He believes that an apartment facility in the downtown area could attract a variety of demographics including young families and retired individuals. While there are a number of rental options in Madison, the number of units are limited so there is a need for additional units.

Mr. Davis reviewed the site plans and reviewed drawings for the project. He noted that the architect for the project is Joel Dargmann who has designed the building with a modern flair. The building will have approximately 30 units on the second and third floor. The first level will have common areas including a fitness room and a courtyard. Half of the units will have outdoor space and there will also be a roof deck. Davis Realty will be making a formal application to the Inland Wetlands Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission. In addition, because the cost of this project will be challenging they plan to apply for the tax incentive program.

In response to a question by Mr. Duques regarding the location of the building to the road and the location of the parking lot. Mr. Davis noted that the building is set back from the road with the courtyard visible and the parking lot is in the rear to improve the aesthetics.

Mr. Anderson commented on the improvements completed with grants on Bradley Road and with Tuxis Pond. One of the grants was focused on helping with the cost of waste water management and an increase in septic capacity. The Town will be working to assist the Davis Realty project with waste water options.

In response to a question by Mr. Dillner, Mr. Davis noted that one-bedroom units will be an average of 700 sf and the two-bedroom units will be an average of 1000 sf. Mr. Davis noted that the current plan provides for a total of 48 bedrooms in 29 – 30 units.

### 3-Minutes of a meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on January 14, 2021

In response to a question by Mr. Steffen, Mr. Davis provided information on the rental market in Town. Most of the existing units are one-bedroom so he believes there will be a demand for the two-bedroom units. There is also an interest in first level units, units that allow dogs and units in the downtown area. The proposed development will be located downtown, will allow dogs and will have elevator access to the second the third-floor units. He also noted that many people do not want the responsibility of owning a house and this project will provide an option for those individuals. Mr. Davis noted that his existing rental project has four buildings with eight unites in each building but they are all one-bedroom. He also owns a number of apartment units above stores.

In response to a question by Mr. Steffen, Mr. Davis noted that his existing one-bedroom unites rent for between \$1,000 to \$1,600.

In response to a question by Mr. Dillner, Mr. Davis commented that he believes the individuals who will be interested in moving into the Bradley Road project would draw people who not only want to live downtown but will also be interested in eating in local restaurants and shopping in Madison in addition to wanting to walk and/or take the train.

Mr. Duques commented that he believes there is substantial potential for individuals who live downtown to get out and patronize Town businesses. The Davis Realty project is also an opportunity to leverage the train station and could provide an additional incentive for the State to complete the train station project.

In response to a question by Mr. Duques, Mr. Anderson noted that the ACCA review went well for this project. He also noted that the Planning and Zoning Commission is expecting the application and he believes the process will go smoothly. He believes there will be some discussion at the Inland Wetlands Commission meeting regarding storm water management but he expects this process to also go smoothly. There could also be some discussion on the sensitivity of Tuxis Pond and the possible impact of this project, however the building is a far enough distance from the pond and Mr. Davis is working to mitigate any possible impact.

Mr. Anderson suggested that the Commission consider writing a letter of support for the Davis Realty project to the Inland Wetlands Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission.

In response to a question by Mr. Dillner, Mr. Davis noted that their goal is to complete the approval process and have the foundation completed early winter. Construction is expected to take 18 – 20 months.

The Planning and Zoning Commission will have a hearing on the application at their meeting in the middle of March and could act at the same meeting. The Inland Wetlands Commission needs to act before the Planning and Zoning Commission act so they will accept the application and

4-Minutes of a meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on January 14, 2021

have a presentation at their meeting the first Monday in February and act on the application at their March meeting.

In response to a question by Mr. Bloom, Mr. Anderson noted that the Planning and Zoning Commission had enacted a change in the regulations that allowed for full scale residential opportunities on Bradley Road.

After discussion, on motion made by Mr. Bloom, and seconded by Mr. Steffen, the Commission voted unanimously to authorize the Chairman to compose a letter of support for the Davis Realty Bradley Road residential development proposal based on their belief that this project will have a positive economic impact on the downtown area and overall community of Madison at large.

5. Shared Wastewater Economic Study Budget Request. Mr. Anderson noted that they had reached out to obtain information from Millone & MacBroom on the scope and budget for a study of the potential economic impact of a downtown shared waste water system. They provided an estimate of \$40,000 - \$50,000 which can be used in a discussion of this potential study with the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Duques noted that this study will focus on the economic value to the Town of facilitating shared waste water facilities and should also look at financial options with a focus on the area between Asylum and Island Avenue School.

6. Board Reports (BOS, BOF, Planning and Zoning)

**Board of Selectmen's Report** – There was no Board of Selectmen's Report

**Board of Finance Report** – The Board of Finance is focusing on the budget season and is expecting to receive budget requests shortly. With concerns about the impact of COVID pandemic in mind, the Board will be looking to keep any increase as low as possible while still providing for community needs.

Mr. Murphy commented that the presentation on the Bradley Road project was helpful and he agrees that this project could be beneficial to the Town. Mr. Duques commented that the type of residential development proposed by Davis Realty tends to require fewer public services than single family homes. He believes the demand for this type of housing is in demand noting that the Cottage Road apartments units tend to fill quickly.

**Planning and Zoning Report-** Mr. Anderson noted that a five-lot subdivision on Long Shore Lane could be the next project on the radar.

5-Minutes of a meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on January 14, 2021

6. Old business. There were no items discussed under new business.
7. New business. There were no items discussed under new business.
8. Adjournment. On motion made by Mr. Dillner, and seconded by Mr. Steffen, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Terry Holland-Buckley  
Clerk