



Town of Madison, CT

Economic Development Commission

Subject to Approval

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on February 17, 2022, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Videoconferencing

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

Also present: Bruce Wilson, Board of Selectman; Sheri Cote, Economic Development Director; Erin Mannix, Town Planner; Barbara Malmberg, Ginn Kozlowski, REX

Dr. Stein called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes of regular meeting January 13, 2022. On motion made by Mr. Bloom, and seconded by Mr. Steffen, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 13, 2022 as submitted.

2. Public comment. There were no public comments.

3. Introduction of Erin Manni, Town Planner. Ms. Mannix expressed that she is happy to be serving as the Town Planner for Madison and is pleased to meet with the Economic Development Commission. She noted that she has begun to work with Ms. Cote on the economic development related Town project passed on by Mr. Anderson. Many of the planning and zoning related projects will include the EDC. She highlighted one major project, the Update of the Plan of Conservation and Development, that will require input from the EDC as well as the public. EDC involvement will also be sought on the Town's effort for sustainable certification. The deadline for this work is April or August depending on the level being sought. She will also be working on the signage program started in 2018- and 2019 using ARPA funds, to update the Town's entry pedestrian and vehicle signage in specific areas of Town. She will be working with the Public Works Department on locations but will come back to the EDC for their input also.

Ms. Mannix reviewed her background noting that she is a Madison resident and she has worked for the Town of Guilford and has a zoning background.

4. REX CEDS update.

Ms. Malmberg reviewed a presentation on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

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(CEDS) which focuses on identifying locally-grown strategies that will guide regional economic development, encourage partnerships and collaboration, and improve economic outcomes and overall quality of life in the region. This plan is a requirement from the US Economic Development Administration to maintain eligibility for federal funding. She noted that in the upcoming year economic development planning will be difficult but also very important. The recovery funding will offer opportunities for transformational change.

Ms. Malmberg highlighted data points noting that the regional population growth has been flat, median home sales prices are up and unemployment is higher than the national average in Connecticut.

Ms. Malmberg reviewed progress and noted highlights in the following areas:

- Healthcare – The region’s pandemic response was positive and gained national attention for Connecticut’s success with the vaccine rollout and outreach to underserved communities.
- Higher Education – The region responded to the pandemic by initially promoting remote learning and then moving students back on campus with stringent testing protocols. The return of students will support local business. Accomplishments over the past two years include creation of both certificate and degree programs in high demand fields, the tiered PILOT payments and a new voluntary payment agreement between Yale and New Haven.
- Bioscience – The region responded by participating in research for COVID – 19 vaccines. Bioscience made an impact by increasing investment in bioscience facilities.
- Manufacturing – The region responded by transitioning production to essential PPE and developing stronger relationships to support the supply chain. The State made a commitment to manufacturing with the appointment of the first Chief Manufacturing Officer.
- Arts/Culture & Tourism – These areas were negatively impacted and some utilized business assistance programs, transitioned to outdoor events and implemented safety measures to reassure patrons. Positive projects in the area include hotel openings planned for 2022 and the Westville Music Bowl.
- Infrastructure – Positive activities have occurred in the area of infrastructure in the areas of air, with the new air carrier, rail and bus.
- Workforce – There was an increase in state and federal funding for workforce development and collaboration between businesses and higher education. Entrepreneurs and new businesses in Connecticut have increased.
- Housing – There has been an increase in the median home sales price. Affordable housing issues are being addressed by the region’s towns.
- Business Friendliness/Reputation – Recent activities in the region and State have worked toward improving the State’s business reputation.
- Cultural Equity and Social Justice – the State has made a commitment to equity from public, private and nonprofit sectors.

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In response to a question by Mr. Steffen, Ms. Malmberg noted that she is not sure of any specific benchmarks that need to be met by a Town with regard to providing for affordable housing. She noted the COG has a consultant in this area. The goal of providing 10% of housing as affordable has been in place for a while

In response to a question by Dr. Stein, Ms. Malmberg noted that she believes that the timing of the Omicron impact accounts partially for the fact that there is a labor shortage but the unemployment rate is higher than the national average. She also noted that Connecticut has an older population many older workers decided to retire so one factor that could help with the labor shortage is to keep older workers engaged in the workforce.

Dr. Stein requested that a copy of this presentation be sent to EDC members.

Ms. Malmberg requested that members let REX know if they are interested in serving on a CEDS subcommittee. She also noted that the 2022 Annual Report & Performance Update is due June 1, 2022 and the 2023-2028 CEDS submission to the US Economic Development Administration is due June 1, 2023.

OLD BUSINESS

5. Light Up Madison 021 final details.
 - a. **Payment due (EDC funds?)**

Ms. Cote advised of an issue that has developed with an invoice for the Light Up Madison project. An invoice for \$5,940 has been provided by the vendor for decorations placed on the Flower Shop on Wall Street and they have been unable to establish responsibility for the payment of this invoice. She questioned if the EDC members were aware of who had requested or authorized this work or if the EDC should have any interest in covering this bill.

Dr. Stein suggested that consideration be given to providing assistance to settle this matter to continue support for this important project.

Mr. Duques noted that the Flower Shop was invited to participate in the program and they declined. He also noted that the Town had taken over the Light-Up Madison Program for this year so this is not an EDC project. He does not feel it would be appropriate for the EDC to pay an invoice for something in which the Commission has no role. Perhaps the Chamber of Commerce or Public Works Department have some knowledge of this display.

Mr. Murphy noted that the Chamber has sponsored a wreath program and the Town sponsored the light program on Wall Street. He suggested that Lauren Rhines in the Selectmen's Office or the

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Finance Office might have some information on the history of the project this year since it was sponsored by the Town through the Selectmen's Office.

Selectman Wilson believes the Town will make sure that this issue is settled but he agrees there need to be an analysis of what happened by looking at the work orders. He agrees that any payment should not come from the EDC since this was a Town project this year.

b. **Lights (retention, disposal, return).**

Ms. Cote noted that a decision also needs to be made on the storage of the lights. The Board members agreed that the lights should be stored in the container at the Surf Club again this year. They suggested that Mr. Hall and Mr. Erskine be contacted to help determine which lights should be stored and help put them in storage.

NEW BUSINESS

6. Town Signage Initiative.

Ms. Cote noted that consideration is being given to using ARPA funds to move forward with the signage plan. She questioned if the EDC would like to play a role in the review of the recommended signage. Dr. Stein suggested that any commitment of the EDC on this project be delayed for clarification and guidance on the possible formation of a Committee to oversee this project.

7. EDC Director Update.

7.a **Waste Water Study Update.**

Ms. Cote noted that the Waste Water Study has not yet started. She will be overseeing the project and will provide the EDC with updates.

7.b **Development projects.**

Ms. Cote noted that there is a restaurant project looking to come to Madison but there would need to be a zone change application.

7.c **E/V stations.**

The Town is looking at the installation of EV stations using grant funding and will be looking to the EDC for input on possible locations.

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7.d Business Retention.

Ms. Cote noted that there have been discussions on developing a plan to schedule meetings with local businesses.

Dr. Stein noted that the EDC had discussed being involved with visiting local businesses so he requested the Ms. Cote include the EDC in these efforts as a part of a business retention sub-Committee.

Other EDC Director Updates.

Ms. Cote noted that she had been involved with the distribution of 2000 masks to business.

Ms. Cote noted that an invitation was received for Madison to join the 9 Town Transit District. A meeting was held with the Executive Director about Madison becoming a member. She noted that there are currently 12 towns in the District which provides on-call bus service. The State was involved with the Transit District in a reimbursement program for bus service between Hammonasset State Park and downtown Madison.

Ms. Cote noted that the First Selectman has developed a list of possible uses for ARPA Funds including:

- COVID Impact Grants – Grants would be made available for members of the arts and business community who were hit especially hard and had a negative impact from the pandemic.
- Site Improvement Grants – Ms. Cote noted that some of the funds are proposed to be made available for businesses to apply for site improvement grants. Guidelines for the grants would be created with EDC input and businesses would apply which would be reviewed by the EDC. Dr. Stein and Mr. Steffen expressed an interest in possibly working on this project for the EDC. The Committee members requested that Ms. Cote send information on this proposal to Dr. Stein and Mr. Steffen for their comment.

Other New Business.

Dr. Stein read the following statement and requested that it be included in the meeting minutes:

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the board to formally recognize Ryan Duques' impressive commitment to Madison in his role as EDC chair for the past decade. As chair, Ryan has been dedicated to the continued economic success of our town. He has been a champion of many initiatives in support of our local economy. Likewise, he has spent countless hours

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working to both identify and preserve the aspects of Madison that make it so special. We are extremely fortunate to have had him leading our team and even more so to have him staying on as a “member at large.” We know he will continue to help us make Madison ever more vibrant. While it is a small symbol and he is deserving of a more grand gesture, I motion that this statement be entered into the official meeting minutes and that we award Ryan a small token of our gratitude with this certificate of appreciation.

The EDC members all acknowledged their appreciation for Mr. Duques for his service to the Economic Development especially his time as Chairman.

Mr. Steffen noted that he will be serving as the EDC representative to the Marijuana Committee and he requested that Committee members send him any input they might have on this topic

Mr. Bloom questioned if there was any update on the second train platform. Mr. Duques noted that there had been a meeting with Senator Cohen when Mr. Anderson was still the Town Planner and it was made clear that, because of the significant amount of wetlands in the area, the construction of the second platform was not likely any time soon. There would need to be a creative way to deal with the wetlands issue which would be a major project so it does not appear that DOT has a commitment to the project at this time.

Mr. Steffen commented on the passage the referendum on the Community Center project and he questioned if there will be a Committee set-up to determine the use of this space. Selectman Wilson commented that the Board of Selectmen will have to come up with a plan for how to move forward with this project.

8. Adjournment. On motion made by Mr. Bloom, and seconded by Mr. Steffen the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Terry Holland-Buckley
Clerk