



Town of Madison, CT

Economic Development Commission

Draft

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on April 9, 2020 via Zoom Videoconferencing

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

Also present: Dave Anderson, Town Planner; Bruce Wilson, Board of Selectmen Liaison; Justin Murphy, Board of Finance Liaison; Sean Scanlon, State Representative and Executive Director of Tweed New Haven Airport; Jerry Davis, member of the public

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

Mr. Anderson noted that this meeting was taking place on a zoom webinar function. Panelists include members of the Economic Development Commission, representatives from the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance and the public is invited as attendees. He noted that the meeting will air on youtube tomorrow.

1. Approval of minutes of regular meeting, February 13, 2020. Mr. Stein had a recommended change to the minutes of the regular meeting of January 9, 2020. Discussion on this change and action on approval was discussed later in the meeting following Item #7.

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

3. COVID-19 Task Force + Survey Results Review. Mr. Duques noted that the Board of Selectmen and Town Departments have worked together to assist residents in responding to the Covid 19 virus. A part of this effort included the formation of a Business Task Force to focus on providing information to businesses on resources and recovery assistance. Mr. Duques noted that he had worked with Mr. Anderson and the Task Force on the development and distribution of a survey on the severity of the impact of the virus on the Madison business community. They plan to conduct a follow-up survey when the recovery begins and is on-going.

Mr. Wilson reported on the Task Force which was asked to take the lead on the economic front. Three objectives were identified as follows:

- What can the Town do now to help businesses with cash flow
- What can the Town do to effectively represent the concerns of business to the State
- How can the Town think outside the box to help businesses in non-traditional ways

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Mr. Wilson highlighted items discussed by the Task Force including property tax deferment, allowing local merchants to hold onto the sales tax they collect, having the Town function as a resource for relief mechanisms available, and coordination of meeting for local businesses to receive input on SBA programs. Mr. Duques noted that these meetings will create a sense of community and provide the businesses with an opportunity to express concerns. One on-going issue is the ability to process applications for SBA assistance since the labor to process the volume of applications is overwhelming.

Ms. Foley advised of the Neighbor to Neighbor program which currently has \$68,000 in funds available to help individual citizens in need. Their funds flow through the Madison Foundation. While the Neighbor to Neighbor guidelines do not allow them to donate directly to businesses, they would like to look into ways they can assist. Mr. Duques noted that the challenge is to define a conduit to channel the money and disperse funds. He would like to see the EDC have a roll in this process working in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce. Additional funds could assist with providing grants to assist with using marketing and social media to help businesses to come back once the crisis is over.

Ms. Foley suggested the possibility of Neighbor to Neighbor setting up a separate fund with specific guidelines to help businesses. The Madison Foundation does not disperse funds to individuals but could be a conduit for dispensing funds to businesses from the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Duques asked Mr. Foley to continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce, Madison Foundation and Neighbor to Neighbor to develop a program.

Mr. Anderson agreed to coordinate a meeting with Ms. Foley and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Foley agreed to contact representatives from Neighbor to Neighbor to include them in the meeting. Mr. Bloom agreed to assist Ms. Foley with this project.

4. Review Resources Available to Businesses in Madison. Mr. Duques noted that a link to the survey results is included on the website. The website also includes a link to the Connecticut Small Business Association and this resource can be used to schedule an appointment with an SBA advisor. He requested that Commission members provide him with information on other good resources that could be posted in the effort to share helpful information.

Mr. Bloom advised that a number of law firms are doing webinars on the available relief programs for small businesses.

Mr. Steffen noted that the Federal SBA website is helpful.

Mr. Bloom and Mr. Steffen agreed to work together to share links to helpful resources.

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5. Discussion on Release of Impact Survey by Chair. Mr. Stein expressed concern for how the recent Survey on the Impact of the Covid Crisis was released. He was surprised that it was distributed as an EDC survey when the Commission members were not given an opportunity to participate. He believes an effort should have been made to allow all Commission members an opportunity to participate and provide input especially when putting out a work product or opinion from the EDC.

Mr. Duques noted that in this situation time was a factor and input and comment was needed quickly to move forward on the survey right away. This type of time sensitive situation comes up from time to time in between meetings.

Mr. Steffen questioned if there was a way for the Commission to communicate to provide input if an issue arises between meetings. Mr. Duques noted that it is possible to call a special meeting if EDC input is needed in between regular meetings. He noted that the goal is to conduct a second follow-up survey so there will be time for the process of obtaining EDC input to be included as a part of this follow-up survey.

9. New Business. Mr. Duques noted that Representative Sean Scanlon has to sign off shortly to be present at another meeting so he requested that an item be added and moved up to next on the agenda to “Receive update report on Tweed New Haven Airport Expansion”.

On motion made by Mr. Duques, and seconded by Mr. Steffen, the Commission voted unanimously to add on the agenda under New Business “Receive update report on Tweed New Haven Airport Expansion” and to move Item #9 to next on the agenda.

Mr. Scanlon noted that he has taken the position of Executive Director of Tweed New Haven Airport. He believes that this airport provides so much promise and can be a key to economic development in the State, and South Central Connecticut region. He provided background on the 10 year effort to obtain approval to extend the runway in the airport’s existing right-of-way. In 2009 the State passed a law that limited the runway and this law was challenged in court by a suit that was lost in District Court. The airport then appealed this ruling and won the appeal to this decision. Because of a recent ruling by the Supreme Court to not hear this case, the appeal court decision stands and the airport now has the right to extend the runway. Mr. Scanlon is confident that, once the current situation with the Covid 19 virus is over, an exciting new chapter for Tweed New Haven Airport will open.

Mr. Scanlon reviewed the steps moving forward in the process. They have begun the FAA Master Plan process. This will involve public hearings, environmental forecasting and planning for a new terminal, preferably on the East Haven side where it would be adjacent to commercial

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activity. In February there were meetings with airline representatives and there is substantial amount of interest in Tweed New Haven Airport.

In response to a question by Mr. Steffen, Mr. Scanlon noted that funding for the expansion is available from the FAA, in addition to some public/private partnership funding sources. The runway work will not be that expensive so he believes there will adequate funding. The targeted timeline is to have the specifics for the runway and terminal complete by March, 2021. The target for FAA approval would be spring/summer, 2021 with work to begin in the fall.

Mr. Scanlon noted that carriers can land on the current runway with specific size planes and he noted that a second carrier is projected to enter this market by the end of the year.

In response to a question by Mr. Duques, Mr. Scanlon noted that the EDC can help support the airport project by assisting with the marketing campaign to get the word out about Tweed. He noted that there are currently 300 destinations that can be reached starting from Tweed and this can increase with the runway expansion. The region needs to understand what expanded use of Tweed could mean for the businesses of Connecticut and for the economic development benefit in the region. Mr. Scanlon agreed to keep the EDC informed as this project progresses.

6. 2020 Priorities Update/Re-Prioritization. Mr. Duques recommended that the revitalization of the business community after the Colvid-19 crisis is over be added to the 2020 priorities of the EDC.

Mr. Steffen noted that he is continuing to oversee any efforts in the area of waste water treatment. He does not have an update on the request of the WPCA for an appropriation of \$100,000 for a waste water study.

Mr. Anderson noted that there are still two applications for the Tax Incentive Program including the Fort Path multi-building project and the Wall Street individual building. Both require Town Meeting approval and the Town is still working out a suitable way to hold a Town Meeting under the current restrictions on group meetings.

Mr. Anderson agreed to send a draft of possible changes to the Tax Incentive Policy for the Commission to discuss and consider at the May meeting and possibly make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Steffen noted that he has been working on the Dashboard item and he has a vision of what it will look like. He will send out a draft so this item can be discussed at the May meeting.

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

Board of Selectmen's Report – Mr. Wilson advised that the Town government is utilizing zoom for operations with the community. All steps are being taken to keep the community safe. A vote was taken by the Board of Selectmen for a Declaration of Emergency. The effort has put some other items on hold as Town government focuses on immediate needs to keep the community safe and provide necessary services.

Mr. Wilson noted that there is no update on Academy or Island Avenue Schools as these projects are currently on hold.

Mr. Wilson noted that the Governor's Executive Order allows town Board of Finances to set the 2020-21 budget so there will not be a referendum on the budget. He also noted that an Executive Order allows Towns to provide for two possible tax deferment options but this would not be available for property owners who pay through their mortgage escrow accounts. He noted that the Finance Director is currently looking at the Town's tax flow and will provide a recommendation on the tax deferment options. Mr. Anderson noted that the Tax Collector has indicated a total of 40% of taxpayers pay their house property taxes through their mortgage escrow accounts.

In response to a question by Mr. Murphy, Selectman Wilson noted that the tax deferment programs would be available to all taxpayers, not just those directly impacted by the virus.

Board of Finance Report – Mr. Murphy noted that the Board of Finance has been provided with the authority to set the Town budget for FY 2020-21 without a referendum vote. The full budget will be published next week. Member of the public can make comments on the Board of Finance e-mail address. Today, information on the impact of the budget increase was put out to the public and some feedback has been received. On April 29th the Town will hold the Public Hearing on the budget and the staff is working on setting up a way to provide for a virtual Town Meeting to allow for public comment.

Mr. Duques thanked Mr. Wilson and Mr. Murphy for the extra efforts being made by the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance during this difficult time.

Planning and Zoning Report- Mr. Anderson noted that the webinar format being utilized for this EDC meeting is a new option being tried and another trial will be done for the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting. He suggested this format might be feasible option for the public hearing on the budget.

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Mr. Anderson provided the following update on Planning and Zoning activity:

- The fourth public hearing on the 4 Boston Post Road project was delayed. On Thursday, April 16th, 7:00 p.m. there will be an option for public input on this project prior to the regular PZC meeting.
- Modifications are being proposed for the General's Residence project. A public hearing on this project is proposed for May 1st.

1 Approval of minutes of regular meeting, February 13, 2020. (continued) Mr. Stein proposed further discussion on a change to the minutes of February 13th. He suggested that the wording in the 5 paragraph on page 3 be changed to clarify that the EDC had voted at the January 9, 2020 meeting to support the businesses right to apply under the Town of Madison Tax Incentive Program Policy.

After discussion, on motion made by Mr. Duques, and seconded by Ms. Foley, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 13, 2020 as corrected.

- Heading on multiple pages should be February 13, 2020 rather than January 9, 2020
- Page 3, Item 3, Paragraph 5 should read "Mr. Anderson provided an update on the status of the two applications that the EDC had acted on at their January 9, 2020 meeting, to support the right of these businesses to apply for the Madison Tax Incentive Program Policy."

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

9. New business. Mr. Stein had further comment on the Covid-19 survey information and on input he believes would be helpful to the Task Force in the follow-up survey. Mr. Stein believes input on a businesses' ability to make rent, mortgage and payroll would be especially beneficial to understand. Also important would be information on personnel related impacts like furloughs, lay-offs and unemployment compensation. Mr. Stein commented that he would like to be an active participant in the second round of survey questions with an opportunity to help determine what is needed by our local businesses to help with recovery. This input will be important for our local and State leaders to assist with the economic recovery.

Mr. Wilson noted that they will be focusing on questions and ideas that would have the most impact. They are asking people to register at Madisonct.com to obtain an access code to be able to participate.

Mr. Duques will work with Mr. Anderson and will send out information to the EDC members about the next Business Task Force session which is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

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10. Adjournment. On motion made by Mr. Duques, and seconded by Mr. Steffen, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

Terry Holland-Buckley
Clerk