



Town of Madison, CT

Economic Development Commission

Subject to Approval

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on April 14, 2022, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Videoconferencing

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

Also present: Sheri Cote, Economic Development Director

Dr. Stein called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes of regular meeting March 10, 2022. On motion made by Mr. Duques, and seconded by Ms. Foley, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 10, 2022 as corrected.

2. Public comment. There were no public comments.

OLD BUSINESS

3. MLAC Update: (Marijuana Legalization Ad Hoc Committee).

Mr. Steffen noted that last month a public hearing was held on March 15th via zoom by the Marijuana Legalization Ad Hoc Committee to provide information from experts and obtain public input. A Committee meeting is being held this evening at 7:00 for further discussion. He believes that the Committee is going in a direction that focuses on the public health issues surrounding marijuana with economic related issues being seen as a low priority. The primary economic issue to consider is the policy that 3% of all sales would be provided to the municipality with marijuana retail or manufacturing facilities in the city or town. This revenue must be used in specific areas including neighborhood improvements, education, corrections post release, mental health and addiction, youth services or civic engagement. .

Mr. Duques noted that he believes this is the first time a sales tax revenue would go to a municipality.

Mr. Steffen commented that his initial feeling from attending meetings is that there is not a much support for either sale or manufacture of marijuana in Madison. He noted that there are a number of small towns in Connecticut that have already put in place a moratorium on marijuana sales. The tax revenue that would go to a municipality is relatively small noting that \$1 million in

2-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on April 14, 2022

sales would only bring in \$30,00 in revenue. He agreed to keep the Commission updated on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

4. Town and Businesses Meet and Greet.

Dr. Stein noted that the Meet and Greet is scheduled for May 19th at the Madison Beach Hotel as a joint event with the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber expects to have 20 members attend and the Commission anticipates approximately another 20 in attendance. Dr. Stein requested that each Commission member plan to attend and also provide him with a biography as soon as possible. Ms. Cote showed the members a number of menu options for the breakfast including a Continental Breakfast for \$16 per person, the Faulkner Buffet for \$34 per person and the Tuxis Breakfast buffet for \$42 per person. The Commission members agreed to provide the Faulkner Buffet option for \$34 per person which would cost \$1200 for 40 attendees.

In response to a question, Ms. Cote noted that there is a balance of \$12,000 in the EDC budget.

After discussion, on motion made by Dr. Stein, and seconded by Mr. Duques, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the expenditure of \$1,200 from the Economic Development Commission budget for the Faulkner Buffet breakfast for 40 attendees at the Madison Beach Hotel for the May 19th Meet and Greet event.

Dr. Stein noted that he has been advised that the Selectmen's Office is working on filling the vacancy on the Commission left by Eric Dillner's resignation.

5. REX Best Practices Program/Webinar.

Ms. Cote noted that Commission members had received an e-mail advising of a REX Best Practice Webinar on April 26th at 6:00 p.m. She noted that members could contact her if they need assistance with registering.

Dr. Stein encouraged all members to attend if possible. This program could be helpful in providing information on how to move forward with economic development projects.

Mr. Duques noted that he had sent an e-mail requesting that the First Selectman provide an update on the Madison Center project at the next EDC meeting including an update on the possible receipt of funds for the second phase.

Mr. Duques also expressed concern that the lights from the Light Up Madison event have not been removed from the trees. With spring now upon us the trees will be growing and wrapped

3-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on April 14, 2022

lights can affect their growth. Ms. Cote noted that the contracted company had removed the lights from the Wall Street trees and Town staff was tasked with removing the lights from the Main Street trees. There had been some question on whether the best course is to remove the lights and then save them or dispose of them and if they are to be saved should they be left on the trees. The Commission members agreed that they should be removed from the trees since this would be unhealthy for the trees to leave them in place.

In further discussion, the Commission members agreed that the lights should be checked and if a strand does not work it should be disposed of but if they work they should be saved. One suggestion was to ask the High School if they would like to take and test the lights for possible use at special events like the post-graduation event. Ms. Cote agreed to follow-up with the Public Works Department and the school.

6. EDC Director Update.
a. **ARPA Fund Projects.**

Ms. Cote provided an update on the activities of the ARPA Committee to propose economic related uses for these funds. Their current concept is to provide a program to allow businesses, or arts or Town related agencies to request up to \$50,000 per year for four years for economic development related projects. There is a total of \$1.9 million available.

A suggestion was made to consider requesting funds for the waste water study but Mr. Steffen noted that he believes funds for this study are included in the Town budget. He suggested that this be confirmed with the Town Planner.

Mr. Steffen suggested that consideration be given to applying for funds for equipment needed to safely remove snow from the Mai Street walkway in order to preserve this infrastructure. Dr. Stein recommended that the Public Works Department be asked to provide input on this idea.

Mr. Steffen also suggested that consideration be given to requesting funds to improve the area of the bathrooms at the Surf Club to improve this facility that is well used by the public.

b. **Tourism Marketing.**

Ms. Cote noted that she had sent the Commission members a memo as follow-up to the previous discussion about creating a Tourism web site as a part of a digital ad campaign. The web site would focus on making potential tourists aware of Madison as a quaint shoreline Town with beautiful beaches, unique boutique shops, trails and other nice places to visit. She is proposing a site which focuses on six areas including shopping, dining, lodging, recreation, a map and an events calendar. Local businesses would have the ability to create a profile to post and to put activities and events on the calendar.

4-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on April 14, 2022

Ms. Cote noted that she has been in contact with the Chamber of Commerce and since their website focuses more on Chamber activities, they agree a tourism website would be beneficial and they are interested in partnering on his project. She noted that additional items that need further consideration are the URL name, the timeline and the budget in addition to planning for Phase 2 which is the digital ad campaign.

Mr. Duques noted that tourism has been a part of the EDC Mission for many years and he suggested it might be worthwhile to review the EDC's Strategic Plan. The challenge with having a website in the past has been upkeep. The EDC created a website a number of years ago and contracted with an outside firm for set-up and maintenance. In addition, the Commission got some pushback from the Town, which eventually took over the site, so he suggested that the idea of the Commission having a tourism website outside of the Town be run by appropriate Town officials. If a Tourism website is approved by the Town and follows the EDC Strategic Plan, he suggested that the Commission put together a Committee to work with the Chamber on this project.

Dr. Stein suggested that consideration be given to putting out an RFP for the development of a Tourism website as soon as possible so that FY 21-22 funds can be utilized for this project. Mr. Steffen suggested that if there is not adequate time for the website RFP, that consideration be given to putting out an REP for the Light Up Madison project as an alternative use of the EDC funds. Mr. Duques noted that the Light Up Madison project is now under the Selectmen's budget rather than the EDC budget. Mr. Duques noted that he believes it would be possible to put out an RFP in the next two weeks and if 30 days is allowed for review and approval, the FY 2021-22 funds could be used or encumbered by June 30th.

In response to a suggestion by Mr. Duques that a line item transfer could be requested from Technical Services to Tourism if necessary, Ms. Cote noted that these two-line items are now combined into one-line item.

After discussion, on motion made by Dr. Stein, and seconded by Mr. Duques, the Commission voted unanimously to direct Ms. Cote to develop an RFP for the creation of a Madison Tourism website using Economic Development FY 21-22 budget funds.

Ms. Cote advised the Commission members that they might be asked to provide input on a short-term rental policy an issue the Town Planner is currently researching. This policy would address Airbnb type of lodging opportunities. This is an economic development issue since there are currently limited lodging opportunities in Madison.

Mr. Duques noted that the Commission had looked at this issue two to three years ago but no action was taken so he suggested that Ms. Cote look into Mr. Anderson's files to see what was reviewed and considered at that time since this information could be helpful.

5-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on April 14, 2022

8. Adjournment. On motion made by Mr. Steffen, and seconded by Ms. Foley, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Holland-Buckley