



Town of Madison, CT

Economic Development Commission

Subject to Approval

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on May 12, 2022, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Videoconferencing

Present: Commissioners Jonathan Stein, Matt Bloom, Anne Foley, Mark Steffen, Andrew Wood

Also present: Sheri Cote, Economic Development Director; Justin Murphy, Board of Finance

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

Dr. Stein introduced Andrew Wood as a new member of the Economic Development Commission. He believes that, with his background, he will be a wonderful asset to the Commission.

Mr. Wood introduced himself noting that he has a 45-year career in the real estate business. He lived and worked in England until 1981. He has worked globally as well as in the United States including serving as the Chief Operating Officer of a business he created with a group. He believes that Madison might experience growth and development in the next 10 years and he would like to serve on the Commission to see what can be done to ensure that Madison is successful in the future.

1. Approval of minutes of regular meeting April 14, 2022. On motion made by Mr. Steffen, and seconded by Mr. Bloom, the Commission voted to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of April 14, 2022 as submitted. Dr. Stein, Mr. Bloom, Ms. Foley, Mr. Steffen voted in favor of the motion and Mr. Wood abstained.

2. Public comment. There were no public comments.

OLD BUSINESS

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

Mr. Steffen noted that at the last MLAC meeting the Committee had approved a couple of motions recommending restrictions and limits on activity that would be allowed under the legislation in Madison and they will pass the recommendations on for Town and public consideration.

2-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on May 12, 2022

In response to a question by Dr. Stein, Mr. Steffen noted that under the legislation a 3% municipal tax can be collected by the Towns. There is division about whether this would apply to cannabis related businesses in addition to sale related businesses.

Dr. Stein noted that a Town in Massachusetts that allowed sales, started off collecting a substantial amount in tax revenue but as more area towns joined in with allowing sales, the volume in this town was reduced but the negative related consequences remained. He advised of a Health Care Study that had determined that when marijuana is available for sale in a town, underage youth generally find a way to obtain access.

Mr. Steffen commented that he does not get the feeling that there is a real push to have sales facilities in Madison.

In response to a question by Mr. Bloom about whether the Committee has access to a State level staff who can assist with questions that come up. Mr. Steffen noted that there is a State resource person available and there were a number of experts at the last meeting to provide input. He agreed to keep the Commission updated on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee.

In response to a question by Dr. Stein, Mr. Murphy noted that the Board of Finance is primarily focusing on waiting for the referendum next week so he had so further Board of Finance update.

NEW BUSINESS

4. Businesses Retention and Expansion.

Ms. Cote reviewed a document that provided her ideas and thoughts on a business retention and expansion program to serve as a base for an open discussion this evening. She highlighted that a business and expansion program will provide a strategy of proactively communicating with existing business. This strategy is important because it is less costly and time intensive to retain a business than to recruit a new business. It is also helpful to have a process in place for periodic check-ins with businesses to see if there is anything the Town can do to provide assistance, which shows the town is looking out for them. The success of existing businesses demonstrates the economic viability of the Town. To move forward with a strategy, Ms. Cote envisioned the establishment of a team to work on activities such as establishing interviews with existing businesses. Other activities include identifying key businesses, interviewing key and other businesses, collecting data and debriefing and tracing data. One aspect that needs to be clarified is whether this work would be done by volunteers or staff, the use of questionnaires or phone interviews, and how to handle non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements.

3-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on May 12, 2022

Dr. Stein noted that REX has stated that retention is one of the most tangible activities that a town can do for economic development. He agrees that a retention plan has value so he supports these ideas.

Mr. Bloom noted that he would be interested in assisting with gathering data from businesses. He questioned if the strategy should also focus on expansion. If a business is having issues and is thinking about moving, touching base with them to see how the Town can assist might serve as an intervention to try to fix any problems that are developing.

In response to a question by Mr. Steffen about the amount of time expected to be invested to assist with this effort, Ms. Cote noted that this would be part of the discussion of the program. She will plan to be involved with the interviews and the First Selectwoman has indicated her interest being involved when it would be a benefit. She would like to have EDC involvement in strategizing on the questions and assisting with conducting the interviews.

Dr. Stein agreed that, as staff, Ms. Cote should serve as the point person but he would also like to see the EDC involved with assisting with the development of questions and the interviews. The EDC members know many members of the community and he believes that having members involved would add value to the project. Ms. Cote agreed that ECD assistance would be helpful. Dr. Stein suggested that Ms. Cote look into utilizing sign-up genius as a tool to help with the project. He likes the idea of conducting a survey of businesses once or twice a year as an effective way to connect. It is important that our local businesses get to know Ms. Cote and also get to know members of the EDC to understand that the Town is available if they need assistance.

Mr. Bloom suggested that the project start with a survey of businesses that includes a question of whether the business would like to meet with a representative of the Town. Ms. Cote noted that in Guilford, she started with requesting a meeting with the highest taxpayers.

Ms. Cote noted that she will start to put together a list of the local businesses and include information on the number of employees, starting with the largest taxpayers.

Mr. Murphy questioned how tenants would be included in the process and Ms. Cote noted that tenants should be included in the interviews. Even if they do not pay property tax on the building, they do pay taxes to Madison on their equipment and furniture and their employees spend money in Madison.

5. EDC Director Update.

Ms. Cote noted that she had sent out information on the proposed EDC Tourism website discussed at the last meeting and has yet to receive any comments from the Commission members. She met with the Town IT Department and they recommended that she talk to an IT

4-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on May 12, 2022

vendor to create a Tourism website that is not a part of the municipal website.

Mr. Bloom commented that he believes it will be important to make the website mobile friendly.

Ms. Cote reported that the web-cam on the Library is working again after being down during the renovation. They are working with the town IT staff to get the camera live on the Town website.

Ms. Cote noted that she had attended a webinar with a panel on economic development and marketing your town and she will forward it to the EDC members.

Ms. Cote noted that the Gaylord PT is planning an event for May 18th at 4:00 p.m. The Folklore Company s having a ribbon cutting event on Saturday May 14th at 10:00.

The ARPA Committee held a meeting tonight at 5:00 p.m. Their proposal includes a \$10,000 Economic Development Strategic Plan as a project with the funds being be used to hire a consultant. Mr. Steffen noted that it will be important to have the Board of Selectmen on board with the goal of this plan. Mr. Murphy agreed that it is important that the Board of Selectmen be involved in this plan and provide direction. He suggested that the Strategic Plan of Conservation and Development come first and that the EDC be actively involved in the development of this plan.

6. Old Business.

6.1 **Town and Business Meet and Greet.**

Dr. Stein noted that the guests have been invited to the Meet and Greet Breakfast to be held on May 19th at the Madison Beach Hotel. Ms. Cote noted that 29 individuals have registered and she requested that any Commission who has not registered, please RSVP to her. Dr. Stein requested that all Commission members provide him with their profile.

Dr. Stein noted that Mr. Duques had sent an e-mail requesting that the Commission discuss the following items:

- 1 The lights have still not been removed from the trees downtown – what is the delay? Ms. Cote noted that the Public Works Department is planning on removing the lights on Sunday.
- 2 What is the status from the First Selectwoman on the removal of the poles from downtown? Ms. Cote noted that they are working on finalizing the pole removal.

5-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on May 12, 2022

Ms. Foley thanked the Commission members for the flowers sent to her after her recent tragic loss of a family member. Dr. Stein indicated the Commission's support for Ms. Foley during this difficult time.

7. Adjournment. On motion made by Mr. Stein, and seconded by Ms. Foley, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Holland-Buckley