



Town of Madison, CT

Economic Development Commission

Subject to Approval

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on June 9, 2022, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Videoconferencing

Present: Commissioners Jonathan Stein, Matt Bloom, Lisa Miksis, Mark Steffen, Andrew Wood

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

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

1. Approval of minutes of regular meeting May 12, 2022. On motion made by Mr. Wood, and seconded by Mr. Steffen, the Commission voted to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of May 12, 2022 as submitted. Dr. Stein, Mr. Bloom, Mr. Steffen and Mr. Wood voted in favor of the motion and Ms. Miksis abstained.

2. Public comment. There were no public comments.

OLD BUSINESS

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

Mr. Steffen noted that the Marijuana Legalization Ad Hoc Committee is currently focusing on obtaining input from Town Departments. The general feeling so far is that they do not believe having a marijuana facility in Madison would have a meaningful economic impact in Town so any decision to allow a facility would more likely be based on non-economic reasons. The Committee is expected to provide a short list of recommended actions to forward for consideration at Town Meeting. It was noted that approval for licensing for marijuana facilities is based on a list of criteria including social equity benefits so Towns like Madison might not rank high as an option to obtain a license.

Mr. Woods commented that there should also be some consideration given to possible indirect economic benefits. Dr. Stein noted that consideration needs to also be given to some of the expenses, like additional counseling especially for youths, that can develop if a marijuana related facility is established in a Town.

2-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on June 9, 2022

4. Business Retention and Expansion.

Ms. Cote .noted that she is putting together a list of questions to reference when interviewing local businesses under the Commission's business retention and expansion efforts. She requested that the Commission members forward any ideas that they have for questions to include. She and Dr. Stein have been discussing a plan to move forward once the questions are developed and they have requested a list of business taxpayers from the Tax Collector that can be referenced to set-up meetings. Commission members will have an opportunity to sign up for any meetings they would like to attend.

5. Town and Businesses Meet and Greet.

Ms. Cote commented that she believes the Meet and Greet was very successful. Mr. Steffen agreed that this was a great event. It was very helpful to meet business related people and it provided a good reconnection after Covid. Mr. Bloom and Dr. Stein also agreed that this was a successful event.

Ms. Miksis commented that it will be important for the Commission to take steps to keep the momentum developed from this event moving forward into the future.

Ms. Cote noted that the Chamber of Commerce Annual dinner is scheduled for June 28, at 5:30 p.m. and she recommended that EDC members attend. She will forward the invitation once it becomes available.

NEW BUSINESS

6. EDC Goals 2022-2023.

- a. Ideas for consideration
 - 1. Virtual Job Fair
 - 2. Event Sponsorship
 - 3. Other

Ms. Cote reviewed the status of the FY 2021-22 budget noting that there is a balance of \$11,189 currently available. She proposed that \$9,000 be earmarked for the work on the development of the EDC website, \$2,000 for photographs and video and \$100 for balance of secretarial services by the Commission Clerk. She will submit purchase orders for the website and photo/video work to secure the FY 2021-22 funds. Ms. Cote clarified that she met with the Town IT and they have approved the EDC having its own website so they are on the same page.

3-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on June 9, 2022

Ms. Cote noted that the budget for FY 2022-23 is \$13,000 and it would be beneficial for the Commission to discuss their goals for next year for the best way to utilize these funds.

Dr. Stein reviewed an e-mail sent by Mr. Duques reviewing a meeting he had with Mr. Wood. They discussed several topics they believe would be worth adding to an EDC priority list including shared waste water, updating zoning to be consistent and encourage responsible development, developing a comprehensive strategic plan for the EDC that is consistent with the Town's plan of conservation and strategic plan. Mr. Duques also commented on EDC strategy and prioritization. He commented that based on the work that the Commission did over the past decade, it was determined that the EDC would concentrate its efforts and bandwidth on working to enhance the Town's economic sustainability by pursuing initiatives and policies that responsibly increase the Grand List. This strategy was outlined in the EDC Action Plan. There has been general agreement that the EDC would focus on enhancing the overall business/development climate in Town, while organizations like the Chamber of Commerce would focus on guides, events, and tourism advertising/events.

Mr. Wood commented that he believes there is a need to be clear on what the EDC should focus on in the long term and what the Commission can do to help the Town grow the Grand List. Demographics show that Madison is an aging Town that is losing population. He would like to see a focus on growing the younger population and the education system is a key component of this effort. Other issues that can play a role include transportation, affordable housing, a vibrant downtown and helpful tax incentives. There is a need to frame these ideas to clarify the efforts of the EDC to implement these ideas. Efforts in 2023 should focus on starting to take steps to improve the Town's demographics.

Mr. Wood commented that one project that could assist with improving transportation would be to resolve the second train station platform issue. Mr. Bloom commented that he feels strong about seeing the second platform move forward as an important economic development project and he believes this would increase ridership.

Mr. Wilson noted that wetlands concerns are the primary issue holding up the second platform. He noted that there have been recent discussions that Shoreline East is not sustainable as it is currently operating but he is not sure if a second platform would have a great impact on ridership. If the Commission would like more information on the status of this project, he suggested that members talk to our local State Senator and Representative. Dr. Stein requested that Mr. Wood draft a letter to State Senator Cohen and Representative Michael Parker to request their assistance with providing an update on the second train station platform and ask for guidance on ways to get this project moving forward again. Mr. Bloom agreed to assist with the drafting of this letter and they will bring a draft back to the next EDC meeting for possible action.

4-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on June 9, 2022

Ms. Miksis indicated her support for a letter being drafted but noted that follow-up after the letter will also be important to make sure that the Commission continues to advocate for the objectives outlined by the Commission. Dr. Stein noted that one way to follow-up would be to invite Senator Cohen and Representative Michael Parker to an EDC meeting.

Dr. Stein commented that one of his main goals for the Commission moving forward is to be more visible, collaborative and insistent.

Mr. Steffen commented that he believes it will be important that, after goals are established, there be a discussion with the Board of Selectmen, who are the policy makers, to ensure that their policies are in alignment with the EDC goals. Dr. Stein agreed and suggested that, after the goals are codified, Mr. Wilson be asked to take the list to the Board of Selectmen for their input and agreement with the EDC's ideas. Selectman Wilson suggested a few other issues for the EDC to consider including the Airbnb facilities, and the Academy project but he agreed that economic development ideas should originate with the EDC.

Mr. Wood suggested that discussion should focus on long term strategic goals as well as short term technical goals to support the ongoing growth of the Town. One longer term goal would be to support the tax incentive program to support development in Town. The Commission can assist with promotion of this opportunity for existing or new businesses.

He requested that members think about goals that should be included for the EDC for 2022 – 2023. These could be discussed by the Commission at the next meeting with the idea of coming up with a consensus that can be provided to the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Cote reminded the Commission members that, as staff, she is always available as a resource and to assist with any projects.

7. Chamber Relationship/Invitation.

Dr. Stein noted that one idea for an activity that has been brought up is to partner with the Chamber of Commerce on a virtual job fair to learn more about the employment gaps and assist businesses to fill these gaps. He believes this could be one way to make the EDC's relationship with the Chamber more collaborative and provide opportunities to work together on ideas like a virtual job fair. Ms. Miksis recommended that a job fair focus on Madison rather than on the region.

Dr. Stein suggested that the Chamber of Commerce President be invited to periodically attend an EDC meeting to promote the relationship between these two organizations with some common goals for Madison and its businesses.

5-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on June 9, 2022

8. EDC Director Update.

Ms. Cote noted that Commission members were sent a link to the current Plan of Conservation and Development which is being updated. The update is the responsibility of the Town Planner who will be working with a consultant on this project. There will also be a Committee formed and an EDC member will be asked to serve on the Committee and provide input from the EDC.

Ms. Cote noted that the Board of Selectmen is forming two Committees for the Community Center including a Building Committee and an Advisory Committee to help come up with programming of what will be done in the building. She will be on the Committee and will be requesting EDC input.

Ms. Cote noted that future EDC meeting agendas should have standing items to discuss the Plan of Conservation and Development, the Community Center project and ARPA Funding

Ms. Cote updated the work of the ARPA Committee noting that they are in the process of collecting and reviewing projects to consider for funding. She has proposed two projects including funding for new welcome signs, based on re-working the 2018 plan, and property enhancement grants for local businesses. Guilford has provided \$1,000 grants under its funding and Madison's could be modeled after this program or consider increasing the amount to \$2,500. She noted that Guilford has received 13 applications for funding and has approved 11. Approved requests so far are for signage, ADA access projects or paving of a parking lot. She requested the EDC's assistance in reviewing and approving applications.

In response to a question by Mr. Murphy, Ms. Cote noted that business owners can apply for a grant but they must have the permission of the property owner for approval of any proposed work.

After discussion, the Commission members agreed that Ms. Cote should pursue the application for ARPA funds for Property Enhancement grants for up to \$2,500 for local businesses.

9. Future Meetings.

Dr. Stein noted that Mr. Steffen has submitted his resignation from the Commission. He has been a great contributor to the Commission and will be missed. Mr. Steffen thanked the Commission members and noted that he has enjoyed working with all of the members on behalf of the Town. He is pleased to have Ms. Cote available as staff for the Commission and believes she will be of great assistance in the Commission's efforts.

Dr. Stein noted that, with Mr. Steffen's resignation, the Commission will need a new Secretary. Mr. Bloom agreed to step in and serve as Commission Secretary.

6-Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on June 9, 2022

10. Adjournment. On motion made by Mr. Stein, and seconded by Mr. Steffen, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Holland-Buckley