



# Town of Madison, CT

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## Economic Development Commission

Subject to Approval

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on October 12, 2023, 7:00 p.m. at the Madison Town Campus and via zoom

Present: Commissioners Ryan Duques, Matt Bloom, Tom Hummel, Gregg Wagner, Andrew Wood

Also present: Erin Mannix, Town Planner; Dawn Jackson, Chamber of Commerce; Caden Micah, Soul & Cedar

### REGULAR MEETING

1. Call to Order.

Mr. Duques called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

3. Temporary Chair Election. Mr. Duques noted that he has agreed to serve as temporary Commission Chairman for this evening's meeting and for November and December to give the Commission time to appoint a new Chairman. Dr. Stein, the former Chairman, had announced his resignation from the Commission at the September meeting.

On motion made by Mr. Wood, and seconded by Mr. Bloom, the Commission voted unanimously to appoint Ryan Duques as temporary Chairman of the Economic Development Commission to serve through December, 2023.

2. Approval of minutes of regular meeting of September 14, 2023. On motion made by Mr. Wood, and seconded by Mr. Bloom, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of September 14, 2023 as corrected.:

Correction: Page 1, Approval of minutes, second paragraph, misspelling of name "Wood"

4. Discuss and take possible action to approve Soul & Cedar LLC, for the Property Improvement Grant in the amount of \$2,500. Ms. Mannix noted that at the last Economic Development Commission meeting the Commission was asked to consider approving an application by Soul & Cedar for funding under the Property Improvement Grant. The members raised a few questions and concerns including that they were not aware any funds were left from the initial and follow-up allocations, and they also questioned if a formal notice that additional applications were being accepted should be advertised.

Ms. Mannix noted that she had confirmed the program had received \$30,000 for the original appropriation and \$12,000 for the follow-up allocation for a total of \$42,000. After all the approved applications were funded, including the North Madison Congregational Church, there is still a balance of \$2575. Some of this balance is because some of the applicants did not need to

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utilize their total grant. An application has been on hold for Donohue's, but this business did not respond to a request for additional information and has since been sold and changed hands. Ms. Mannix also noted that the wording for the notice for the program states that the program will be open until all funds are used so she does not believe there is a need to re-advertise the program.

Ms. Mannix noted that the new application is from Caden Michah, Soul & Cedar, LLC, who is present at the meeting this evening. At the September meeting a question was raised about this specific application concerning whether this new business would be ADA accessible. Ms. Mannix noted that the site plan for the building had been approved for the exterior signage, exterior building and deck painting, new front door, landscaping, lighting and railings and porch improvements and for an ADA accessible ramp. The design is complete, and the permit is approved but an ADA accessible ramp is not mandated.

Mr. Micah confirmed that the plan for a ramp is approved, however, the regulations provide that, if the cost of a ramp exceeds 20% of the cost of the project, the applicant can receive an exemption. Because of the cost, their intent is to construct a ramp as a second phase of the renovation at a later date. He also noted that the store will be a sister store to their men's store in Guilford and will carry women's clothing, lifestyle goods, home décor and some men's ware. The plan is to open on November 1st or November 2nd.

Mr. Bloom commented that Ms. Mannix and Mr. Micah have addressed the concerns raised by the Commission at the last meeting, so he supports their application for the Property Improvement Grant.

Mr. Duques agreed that hearing the background information from Ms. Mannix has cleared up any concerns expressed by the Commission about the application funds and timeline, so he is also satisfied. Mr. Hummel and Mr. Wagner agreed that the application fits the established criteria, and they also support approval of the request.

After discussion, on motion made by Mr. Hammel, and seconded by Mr. Bloom, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the application by Soul& Cedar for \$2500 from the Property Improvement Grant

5. Discuss the Holiday Lights 2023 RFP. Mr. Duques noted that an RFP was put out last week for the installation of a holiday lights and decorations display in the Town Center and on Wall Street. He provided background on this project noting that in 2020, the social environment was gloomy due to the pandemic and one of the entities especially impacted were retail and downtown shops. At the time, there were some funds remaining in the Economic Development Commission budget and an idea was proposed to light up the downtown area to give people something fun and exciting to brighten up the holidays during this gloomy period. Together with the Chamber of Commerce an RFP was developed to get proposals to "Light Up Madison". A company was selected, and the downtown area and Wall Street were lit up. This project was very well received.

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The hope was that this initial Town sponsored initiative would be the catalyst to continue the “Light Up Madison” project as an annual event. The Town and Commission continued to help put together and promote “Light Up Madison” in 2021 and 2022. To continue this tradition, funds toward the project have also been included in the Town budget toward the 2023 project.

Ms. Mannix noted that in 2022, the cost to decorate the downtown and Wall Street areas exceeded the budget so there was talk about partnering with the Chamber of Commerce and getting local retail business involved in supporting the effort and possibly work toward a program expansion to include various holiday related activities. To get 2023 moving forward an RFP went out recently but the budget is under \$20,000 which is lower than the amount provided in 2022. To allow vendors to be flexible and help the Town stay within the budget, the RFP provided information on the number of poles and trees in the area and the number of type of decorations to be provided was kept fairly open. The interested vendors were provided with some possible examples of displays that would be encouraged. The vendors are being asked to provide an itemized list with prices so the Town will be able to pick and choose a display that fits into the budget.

Ms. Jackson noted that in prior years the Chamber of Commerce has provided wreaths and Mr. Duques noted that last year the Chamber also collected funds from local businesses to use for materials for the project. She noted that John Mather from the Madison Beach Hotel has indicated they would give \$2500 to decorate the Library this year. She also noted that Madison Earth Care provided the wreaths last year and she can contact them to ask about their possible participation this year with wreaths and sponsoring the decorations for the trees and poles. Wreaths are generally displayed on Wall Street and both sides of Boston Post Road with a design that matches the Town lights. Mr. Duques suggested that thought be given to also including the trees in the Route 1 island since power is now provided in this area. If necessary, decorations could be on a smaller scale to fit within the budget.

Ms. Jackson noted that there is a merchant meeting next Monday and she can check with them about their intentions to participate this year and report back to the Commission on their response.

Mr. Bloom noted that he might be able to help with signage and banners and wholesale decorations through his new business.

Ms. Mannix suggested that it would be helpful to come up with design standards for the holiday decorations to provide some guidelines for what the Town would envision. She also suggested that it would be helpful to obtain input from local businesses on how long they would like to see the display up after the holiday season. Last year the display was up from November 10<sup>th</sup> and into February.

Ms. Jackson noted that Mr. Hall, Beach and Recreation Department, has indicated their intention to expand the tree lighting activities this year so she recommended that he be included in any discussion on the project.

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The Commission members requested that Ms. Mannix provide copies of the proposals received before they are submitted to the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Jackson noted that holiday events scheduled so far this year include Santa's arrival on November 27th, the Tree Lighting on December 1st and a Ladies Shopping Night on either November 30th or December 3rd. Other upcoming Chamber events include the Trunk Or Treat event on the Green on Halloween from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. with a rain date of November 1st. There is no fee, but participants must register in advance. There is a paper shredding event scheduled for October 21st from 9:30 to 11:30 in front of the Chamber office.

6 New business. Ms. Mannix reported on the following PZC activities:

- There is a pending Inland Wetlands Commission application for 43 A & B Wall Street to demolish the existing structure and build a three-story office building for Principal Wealth Management. They went before the Design Committee and received a variance for an additional 5' over the maximum allowed building height. They will be going to the Inland Wetlands Commission because the building is within 100' of a wetland. If they receive all approvals, they will then apply to Planning and Zoning for a variance.
- There is a new proposed residential development at the north end of the Barberry Hill property.
- The former Winter Club received Inland Wetlands Commission approval for a renovation into a restaurant. They still need to apply to the Planning and Zoning Commission for the creation of a new zone on this property. In response to a question by Mr. Duques, Ms. Mannix agreed to review the language to see if this project would be eligible for the Tax Abatement Program.
- A project on Cottage Road will be breaking ground in November for a 24-unit affordable housing project. This project received a tax abatement for the affordable units.
- The POCD and Strategic Plan continue to move forward. Mr. Wood has been serving as the Economic Development Commission liaison to the POCD Committee. They are also looking to get funds in July for a comprehensive zoning update. They will be looking at both the natural and building environments, infrastructure and housing issues which are big concerns.
- The Academy Building Committee is very busy working with the Fuss & O'Neill with reviewing the project and budget to see what is affordable. They are going through various scenarios as they work to stay within the budget. She serves as the staff for this Committee.

In response to a question by Mr. Duques regarding the replacement of the Economic Development Coordinator position, Ms. Mannix noted that, since this position was funded through ARPA, is only funded through June, 2024. The Town needs to identify what the Madison need is and budget for a salary before moving forward with advertising. This was a shared position with Guilford, and they are moving forward with advertising for a new staff person since their funding is included in their budget.

7. Public Comments. There were no public comments.

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ADJOURNMENT.

On motion made by Mr. Wood, and seconded by Mr. Hummel, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Holland-Buckley