

**TOWN OF HADDAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING
HADDAM YOUTH CENTER
Wednesday, 14 January 2009, at 7:00 PM
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Change by the Commission***

X	Heather Batzner
X	Joseph Bergin
X	Charles Everett
X	Barbara Fernandez
X	Michael Fortuna, Chairman
X	Peter Gillespie
X	Lori Maggi
X	David Papallo
X	Edward Vynalek
X	Liz West, Town Planner
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

1. Call to Order

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

2. Attendance

Attendance was taken.

3. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Fortuna requested that the agenda be amended to allow the Farmer's Market item to be discussed first. Mr. Vynalek suggested that due to potential controversy, that this matter not be taped. Mrs. Batzner stated that a public meeting has to be taped unless an executive session is called. Mr. Fortuna stated he didn't feel an executive session was needed. Mr. Vynalek stated that he had some papers to distribute to the Commissioners in regard to Haddam Bulletin articles.

3a. Farmer's Market

Mindi Swanson, speaking on behalf of the Higganum Village Farmer's Market Group, stated that the group's mission is the revitalization of Higganum Center, that they were misdirected to form a LLC, that they do intend to become a non-profit, and that area business sales increased on the day of the inaugural farmer's market (businesses plan to run market specials during the 2009 market season).

Ms. Swanson stated that they were advised by Mr. Bondi, first selectman, to request money from the EDC due to their objective to revitalize Higganum Center and that there was an existing surplus in the 2008-2009 budget as well as a precedent set by the Haddam River Days who receive funding through the EDC.

Ms. Swanson stated that the group has received a matching grant from the Connecticut Dept. of Agricultural for half of their budget and that farmer's markets in Bozrah and Lebanon have also received this grant and are receiving matching funds from their respective towns. Liz Bazazi stated that these are the only three farmer's markets receiving this grant. Ms. Swanson continued by stating that the group is requesting that the EDC go to the first selectman to request a transfer of funds from the 2008-2009 budget to a new line item, Village Revitalization, for the Higganum Village Market. The group would like the Commission to invest at the \$3,500 originally requested, if not more. Ms. Swanson noted that at this time the group is not requesting a line item on the 2009-2010 under EDC as they plan to seek their own line item.

Mr. Papallo asked if the group had begun the process of becoming a non-profit. Ms. Swanson stated no. Ms. Bazazi stated that it recently became apparent that it was the wrong decision to form the LLC, that they were unaware that they could file for certain grants on their own as a non-profit, and that due to being a LLC, they went through EDC for the Middlesex County Community Foundation grant. Ms. Bazazi stated that Ms. Swanson went through the Conservation Commission for the agricultural grant.

Ms. Fernandez asked how the group handles funding that they are receiving. Ms. Swanson stated that there's a separate checking account and that they have a tax identification number. Ms. Fernandez asked who applied in the market group's name as Dept. of Agricultural grants are normally given to farmers, municipalities, and 501c3's. Ms. Swanson stated that the Conservation Commission. Ms. Fernandez asked if an award letter has been received. Ms. Swanson stated that a letter has been received stating that they have been granted the funds and that more information will follow. Ms. Fernandez asked if the Conservation Commission will be monitoring the 50 percent match noting that if funds are transferred from EDC, those funds cannot be used as part of the matching funds as the Town of Haddam will be receiving the grant monies. Ms. Bazazi stated that the State is aware of the request from EDC and that they accepted it. Discussion followed with it being noted that this area needs to be clarified.

Mr. Vynalek stated that an article indicated that the grant money would go to the Town of Haddam for use by the farmer's market. Ms. Fernandez explained how the process will work (town will be responsible for managing the grant until the market group becomes a 501c3). Ms. Fernandez requested the group to share a copy of the agricultural grant with EDC.

Mr. Fortuna stated that EDC has been publicly criticized for not supporting the market and that it has been indicated that EDC did not follow through on the Middlesex Community Foundation grant. Mr. Fortuna stated that the Commission has worked very hard over the last several years to establish some credibility and that he has received a number of phone calls in regard to the loss of a grant. Mr. Fortuna also stated that to not separate the issue of whether or not EDC is going to grant funding from whether or not EDC supports the market is wrong. Mr. Fortuna continued by stating that there was a legal question as to whether or not the Commission could transfer funds as requested and that he has been advised by town counsel that the Commission cannot and that a process must be followed (Commission needs to vote on it).

Mr. Fortuna stated that when the request came into EDC there was a great deal of discussion and that the Commission understands and supports the market group's mission. However, there was still the question of whether the funding could be transferred legally and by the time EDC was able to address the question, the first market day was held and the urgency was no longer there.

Mr. Fortuna stated that one of the reasons that EDC had concerns about the money and how it would be spent was due to a letter from Mr. Vynalek. Mr. Fortuna noted that Mr. Vynalek has been a long time town volunteer, that his opinion is respected, and that he's also listed as one of the market group's advisor; therefore, when there were questions in regard to the proposal, the Commission listened to his comments and then tabled the matter until additional information could be obtained (noted that this was not mentioned in the article).

Mr. Fortuna stated that in regard to the Community Foundation grant, the application was filled out and submitted by the Village Market directly to the foundation, that EDC or the town was not given a copy of the application and that there was no information provided to any town entity that a follow up was required. Therefore, when a letter, which was not addressed to either Mr. Fortuna or any EDC member but rather a market group member, was received at the Land Use office on 11/14/2008 went into the basket. It was noted that all information required was due on 11/7/2008.

Mr. Fortuna stated that with the understanding that it's to assist the group with getting the market going and that next year the group will obtain their own town funding.

MOTION: Mike Fortuna made a motion to request that the Board of Selectmen asked the Board of Finance to reallocate \$2,500 from the Grant Writer line item to a line item called Higganum Village Market Start Up Cost Assistance. Heather Batzner seconded. Motion carried 8-1.

Prior to the vote, the following discussions took place: Ms. Fernandez asked that the town or EDC receive data (number of vendors, attendance counts, sales, market specials, etc.) by whoever receives the grant. Ms. Bazazi gave a brief accounting from the initial market day.

Mrs. Maggi stated that when she became an EDC member, she had been advised that EDC was strictly advisory and asked for clarification as to what's the Commission's mission. Mr. Fortuna read the mission directly from the town charter and stated that he's been advised that if EDC requests funds from the Board of Finance that those funds have to be spent for their specific purpose. Discussion followed in regard to the line item for Haddam River Days. Although, EDC does not want to see River Days end, but as a funding mechanism, it may not be appropriate to continue funding this event through the EDC. Mrs. Maggi also stated that she supports the farmer's market; however, part of tabling the issue initially was due to the Commission not believing they were the place to requesting funding.

Mr. Everett and Mr. Papallo asked if the funding was still available and if so, can it be encumbered for another project. Mr. Papallo stated that he has some difficulty with approving the funding as the group is a for profit group as it currently stands. Ms. Bazazi and Ms. Swanson stated that money has been donated by market group members and that no member has taken money from the initial market day. Mr. Papallo stated that he understands that the group isn't generating money or profit, but that it's the way the group is presently set up and questioned what would stop another group from requesting funds from EDC.

Karin Blaschik, Tylerville business owner, asked if vendors who have signed up for the farmer's market are local. Ms. Bazazi stated that the focus is to obtain local vendors first,

but that vendors are from all over the area. A brief listing of local vendors was given. Mrs. Maggi asked if the folks in Tylerville were included. Ms. Bazazi stated that vendors either have to produce the goods themselves or assemble the goods to make a product. Mr. Papallo asked Ms. Bazazi if she had been contacted in regard to the article concerning EDC. Mr. Fortuna stated that it was not the article as much as the letter to the editor. A brief discussion followed with it being noted that the letter to the editor is not factual.

Mrs. Maggi stated that in September there were several business owners who had voiced concerns in regard to EDC funding the market vs. other businesses; and that she had also requested monies for signage to support existing businesses.

Discussion followed in regard to the need to establishing a policy in regard to funding or not funding organizations, etc. Mr. Fortuna will contact town counsel in regard to the procedure for establishing a policy.

Mr. Papallo asked that someone from the market group submit a letter to the editor in order to set the record straight.

4. Approval of Minutes

Tabled.

5. Public Comment

None.

6. Tylerville Strategic Vision Workshop

Mr. Fortuna reviewed files regarding Tylerville (copies to subcommittee and town planner) – 1) 2000 economic summary report, 2) 2000 water system evaluation study, 3) 1999 infrastructure needs analysis, 4) 1999 planning for economic development report and action plan, and 5) current zoning for Tylerville (C-1 zone).

Mr. Fortuna stated that the goals are: 1) mission statement, 2) identify Tylerville Village zone, and 3) outline next steps.

Mr. Everett stated that Tylerville and the business district needs to be outlined. Mr. Fortuna stated that the village needs to be defined. A brief discussion followed in regard to the water issue and whether or not it should be included in the district (the water district may not be the same as the village district). Ms. West stated that Chatham Health District has done a study that includes both businesses and residences along Camp Bethel Road; and that she believes the two issues (water district and village district) separate.

Discussion followed in regard to Bridge Road (Rte. 82) - slowing traffic down, making the area pedestrian friendly, installation of sidewalks, landscaping (sight line issue, not recommended), parking, identifying areas of potential growth, drive-thru windows (whether or not to have them), lighting, a more compact village district, what to include and exclude, and whether or not there were areas that could be developed in the future.

Mark Degnan, Tylerville subcommittee member, brought maps of the Tylerville area in which to work off of. Using the maps, the Commission outlined what they felt was the Tylerville area as well as noting various properties as points of reference. It was noted that Tylerville and the commercial district will need to be separated. Ms. Fernandez suggested that the village district go down to the Connecticut River. Mr. Papallo suggested that East Haddam's

regulations be reviewed as well. Mr. Degnan stated that he will have the maps compiled by the next meeting.

A brief discussion followed in regard to the Valley Railroad - train presently comes up as far as the Goodspeed Landing (Eagle Watch event, dinner train).

Items which the subcommittee needs to address: 1) Mission Statement – subcommittee members need to formulate a statement. Draft statements to be emailed to subcommittee members as well as EDC members who are interested. 2) Public process – Start with an informational meeting to present district, mission statement, re-writing the zoning regulations (specifically for Tylerville Village District), and vision session (people can discuss what they envision for the area). Mr. Fortuna and Gail Powell, owner, Hi-Way Package Store, briefly discussed the process in which the Higganum Village District regulations came to be.

7. Old Business

a) Farmer's Market – Previously heard.

b) Proposed Potential Sewer Project – Wright-Pierce Study – Higganum Center

Mr. Fortuna stated that a meeting will be held with the DOT in Norwich on Friday, 1/16/2009, 10:00 a.m. to confirm the route of proposed project (connection point revised). Mr. Fortuna stated that a final report should be available by the end of the month and that a presentation by Wright-Pierce could be made in February.

c) Town's Tax Incentive Policy – Revised Draft

A brief discussion followed in regard to the proposed policy. There was concern by Commissioners that residential property was on the list for potential tax abatements, but other than that they felt the document was well written. Further discussion tabled until February.

d) Tylerville Subcommittee – Update – Previously heard under Workshop.

8. New Business

a) 2009-2010 Budget

Discussion followed in regard to encumbering funds in the Consulting Fees line item (2008-2009 budget) in anticipation of funding for presentations regarding Tylerville (both proposed village zone and water issue), the removal of the River Days line item from the EDC budget (create their own line item), and requesting \$10,000 for Planning and \$5,000 for Marketing (2009-2010 budget).

MOTION: Mike Fortuna made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the Haddam River Days line item be removed from EDC's budget and that they request their own line item. Chuck Everett seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Maggi stated that funding should be used to enhance Haddam's commercial signage (part of village concept), business directory, and web page (enhance EDC's link).

b) New EDC Projects/Initiatives/Discussion

Mr. Fortuna stated that Paul DeStefano's term has expired. Discussion followed in regard to how many people are allowed on the Commission.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned 10:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

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Recording Clerk

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 11 February 2009, 7:00 p.m.