

**TOWNS OF HADDAM AND EAST HADDAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS
SPECIAL JOINT PUBLIC MEETING
HADDAM YOUTH CENTER
Monday, 25 January 2010, at 7:00 PM
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Change by the Commission***

X	Heather Batzner
X	Joseph Bergin
A	Dan Dachelet
A	Charles Everett
X	Barbara Fernandez
X	Michael Fortuna, Chairman
X	Peter Gillespie
X	Lori Maggi
X	David Papallo
A	Edward Vynalek
X	Liz West, Town Planner
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk
X	Bob Casner, East Haddam (7:20P)
X	Deb Mathiasen, East Haddam
X	Bob Scherrer, East Haddam
X	Melissa Ziobron, EDC Coordinator, East Haddam

1. Call to Order/Attendance

Mr. Fortuna called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. and attendance was taken.

2. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Ziobron stated East Haddam EDC had already approved the minutes from October, but was unsure if Haddam EDC had. Mr. Fortuna stated Haddam EDC opted not to approve the minutes as Haddam didn't take the minutes, but did record them as informational notes. Mr. Fortuna stated the minutes were reviewed at the 01/13/2010 regular meeting of the Haddam EDC and there were no comments made at that time.

3. Haddam Initiatives Update – Tylerville Project Description

Mr. Fortuna stated there is not a lot to report at this time. Dunkin Donuts is being constructed (expected to open in March or April) and the Country Market is scheduled to open on 01/31/2010.

Mr. Fortuna stated the Tylerville Subcommittee needs to be revitalized and there is no update at this time.

Ms. Ziobron asked for an update regarding the water project. Ms. West stated the analysis is going well thanks to Chatham Health District taking the burden off of DEP and another round of quarterly testing has been completed. Ms. West stated the town cannot get the funds released from a STEAP Grant for engineering (feasible/appropriate to bring water up from Chester).

Mr. Fortuna stated there are still two schools of thought – bringing water up from Chester or Haddam building its own system (appears to be evenly divided at this point). Ms. West agreed. Mr. Scherrer asked if the system would just be for Tylerville. Mr. Fortuna stated yes, as it's a "hot zone".

Transfer Station - Ms. West stated she is working with DEP in regard to the transfer station. The town has entered into a consent order to evacuate the site by 7/31/2010 and is presently trying to get an extension to keep the site open while review alternatives.

Ms. Ziobron stated it was her understanding that the consignment shop would be moving into the former restaurant in the Swing Bridge Plaza and asked why a restaurant wasn't successful in going back into the structure. Mr. Fortuna stated through brief discussions with the property owner a restaurant will not be going back into the building due to lack of someone being able to pay the rent.

Valley Railroad Line - Ms. Ziobron stated she is the representative to the Midstate Regional Planning Agency (MRPA) and was surprised to hear that Haddam was against opening up the rail line again and asked EDC's position. Mr. Fortuna stated this issue has not yet been formally discussed. Discussion followed regarding potential impact on residential property and there being no benefit to the town north of Tylerville (only a quarter mile of eight miles of track would be of benefit to the town).

Ms. Fernandez stated state funding for railroad projects is being focused in Stamford, New Haven, Hartford and Springfield. Ms. West stated freight coming from Springfield uses the Amtrak line down to Stamford causing delays in commuter service and it is costly to use the line. Ms. West stated Haddam is in a slightly unusual position as the line is owned by DEP and the Valley Railroad has a 100 year lease with the intent being for freight. Ms. West stated she didn't think this would be good for Haddam and there are concerns regarding the lines proximity to the river.

Mr. Casner stated he has walked the line and there are two main bridges which are out and need to be rebuilt. Mr. Casner also noted how close the line is to some of the houses.

Higganum Project Initiatives - Ms. West stated there's interest in the property next to the Dunkin Donuts on Rte. 154 for a medical office and possible Subway.

Sewer Project - Mr. Fortuna stated two big initiatives in Higganum are the sewer project (have final report and need to recommend to selectmen) and the Rossi development (throws a wrinkle in the sewer project as the project did not include the density being proposed). Mr. Fortuna stated perhaps there could be some discussion with the developer regarding the sharing of funds to construct a treatment plant. Ms. Ziobron asked if the plant would feed commercial and residential or just commercial. Mr. Fortuna stated at this point commercial would be required to connect and residential would be allowed to connect. Mr. Casner asked how large of a district is being proposed. Mr. Fortuna stated from Dunkin Donuts (Rte. 154) south to High Street out Rte. 81 to the first bridge (past AJ's Plaza) and a short distance down Depot Rd. (include town garage and Rossi property). Discussion followed.

Ms. Ziobron asked the reasoning behind going in this direction. Mr. Fortuna stated the primary reason is land area being taken up by septic systems (unable to expand buildings) and to free up land in order to build a street with a more village feel and to expand business opportunities without having septic systems taking up all of the space. Mr. Fortuna stated the wells are an issue, but not as big of an issue as the septic system.

Mr. Scherrer stated in Moodus it's more about capacity. Mr. Casner stated there are systems that have failed and people putting in costly new systems with short life spans. Mr. Scherrer stated a sewer system would allow Haddam to develop in an area where development is wanted.

Bed & Breakfast - Ms. Mathiasen stated Maryan Muthersbaugh, tourism representative on the Regional Tourism District, and owner of the Nehemiah Brainerd House Bed and Breakfast, Haddam, is putting together a regional bed and breakfast council. Ms. Mathisen asked if Ms. Muthersbaugh has interacted with the Commission (she has not). Ms. Mathiasen stated due to budget constraints, this Regional Tourism District has combined with New Haven.

4. East Haddam Initiative Updates – East Haddam Village Project Description

Mr. Scherrer stated the actor housing for the Goodspeed Opera House is a little behind schedule as the well system they would like to install is being declared a public water system. The Department of Public Health is requiring the town to take over the system and then have a third party run the system. Mr. Scherrer stated funds are being obtained from the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), but they will not release the funds until the Department of Public Health signs off on the matter.

Mr. Scherrer stated the Village Project for the parking area across from the Goodspeed and Gelston House is a little more than two acres. A revitalization commission has been in place reviewing this for a little more than a year and recently went before the Board of Selectmen to ask for funding for a basic conceptual design. Mr. Scherrer stated the area is still mixed use -more commercial than residential.

Mr. Scherrer noted four of the Goodspeed buildings, which are currently used for actor housing, will be going on the market when the new actor housing is completed. Ms. Fernandez asked how many people would be living in the houses. Mr. Casner stated 120. Mr. Scherrer stated there are overlaps with actors for the current show and actors rehearsing for the pending show and housing is needed for the crews that maintain the stages.

Mr. Scherrer stated a negative for the Village is that the four houses are located on the strip and, therefore, are not available for retail or commercial, limiting the number of businesses in the Village. Mr. Scherrer stated the revitalization commission feels that by lumping these buildings in with the parking lot area they could get up to 40,000 sq. ft. (critical point for developer interest). Mr. Scherrer also stated it has been extremely difficult to get developer interest.

Mr. Scherrer talked about state funding to improve the sidewalks up to Ray Hill Road and access within the Village was lost due to the town's inactivity. However, when Ms. Ziobron came on as coordinator she found \$250,000 which had already been approved and DOT said to use it. Mr. Scherrer stated the funding will be used for traffic calming/pedestrian safety with three crosswalks being installed.

Mr. Scherrer stated DOT had plans to replace the bridge over Succor Brook, but this probably will not occur as it's unfunded and probably will not be funded. Mr. Scherrer stated the revitalization commission was hoping to use the funding to change the access to the existing parking. The commission is working on an easement exiting out the back of the lot by the Sweet Shop which would be an exit only south of the Sweet Shop.

Ms. Ziobron suggested reviewing the DOT website which prioritizes projects some of which are on a list referred to as "Unfunded" and Succor Brook was on the list. Ms. Ziobron also stated the lack of this work puts a burden on the town in regard to safety.

Business District Extension - Ms. Ziobron stated she will be supporting a business owner in an effort to extend the business district at the next East Haddam P & Z meeting. The proposal is to extend the district from the bottom of Ray Hill Road to the Weeds building at the beginning of Boardman Road. Ms. Ziobron stated the Weeds building was originally approved as a home occupation as the owner lived next door; however, the owner could not rent the building unless the district is extended.

Bed & Breakfast - Ms. Ziobron stated another bed and breakfast has been approved at the former Seraph building. The business was approved through a Connecticut State law which allows for homes that have up to three bedrooms to have a bed and breakfast. Mr. Fortuna stated Connecticut has adopted a new building code regarding bed and breakfasts which may undo the law Ms. Ziobron was speaking of. Discussion followed.

Tax Incentive Policy - Mr. Scherrer stated EDC is in the final steps of writing a tax incentive policy and hope to have the policy before the selectmen in February.

Moodus – Mr. Scherrer stated Moodus has severe limitations and is a designated area for support businesses (grocery stores, restaurants, etc.). Mr. Scherrer stated there is plenty of space, but there are limitations in regard to septic issues. A brief discussion followed regarding the system at the new middle school (large septic system). Ms. Ziobron stated the reason the middle school gym is so large is due to the high school gym not being large enough to host CIAC tournaments.

Sunrise Resort - Ms. Fernandez asked for an update regarding the Sunrise Resort. Mr. Scherrer stated they have met with DEP and the facility is currently being used by the state police for dog training. A lot of cleaning up needs to take place before any events could be held at the facility. It was suggested to DEP to hire a professional operator for the facility. Ms. Ziobron stated two developers toured the site, however, most of the buildings are asbestos contaminated and need to come down. DEP spent money to develop plans to show what the area would look like as a campground with tent and RV spaces. A brief discussion followed as to whether or not Sunrise Resort was within the Gateway Zone (it is not).

Cave Hill - Cave Hill is a family owned campground and had looked to expand at one point by including horse riding. Mr. Casner stated Cave Hill is in excellent condition.

Johnsonville - Mr. Scherrer stated water in coming into the buildings and the roofs are deteriorating. A developer was interested in developing the area, but the issue of density was a problem. The property is privately owned and is currently on the market. Ms. Ziobron stated in the last year there have been two people who have shown interest with one being particularly interested in using the water for hydro-electrical to feed the entire development.

Ms. Ziobron stated Colchester has just completed a large mix use project which may be worth looking at in terms of ideas and also speaking to the local selectmen to get their opinion on the project.

5. Review of Common Goals

Bridge Walkway - Ms. Ziobron stated she has spoken to Geoff Colegrove, MRPA, in regard to the bridge walkway and will try to get the figures update. Mr. Colegrove provided a draft of MRPA's project rating criteria. Ms. Ziobron stated the STP-Enhancement Project can come out at any time (no set funding date). Ms. Ziobron stated she is willing to work with Mr. Colegrove in regard to this project and believes the only way East Haddam will obtain funding is by filing jointly. This item to be discussed in more detail at the next quarterly meeting.

Second Congressional District 2011 Appropriations Funding Requests - Ms. Ziobron discussed a cover letter regarding appropriations funding requests for projects and priorities in the Second Congressional District. Submission deadline is 02/19/2010. Discussion followed regarding some of the programs.

Eagle Fest, 13-14 February – Ms. Ziobron supplied a draft overview of events for the weekend. East Haddam has not committed to anything at this point in regard to the "East Haddam Connection" section. Ms. Ziobron stated she was unsure as to whether or not the Goodspeed

Station was aware of this event and suggested someone notify them. Ms. Maggie stated she would contact them. Further discussion followed in regard to ticket sales.

Chowder Fest, Saturday, 20 March, 11:30 a.m. - Ms. Ziobron stated the chowder fest has been moved to March and will be held at La Vita Gustosa. Money raised from the festival will be donated to charity. Ms. Ziobron noted a number of Haddam restaurants participated last year.

Haddam/East Haddam Middlesex Chamber of Commerce Meetings – Held the fourth Thursday of every month at 8:00 a.m. at the Haddam Vol. Fire Dept. Co. 1.

East Haddam Business Night, Friday, 29 January – To be held at the East Haddam Grange from 6:30-9:00 p.m.

6. Swing Bridge

Discussion followed in regard to the opening of the bridge (winter on demand; summer on the half hour; commercial on demand) and it's affect on motor vehicle traffic; river traffic being controlled by the Coast Guard (probably will not get support in changing the manner in which bridge is opened); and the possibility of installing a sign noting "Historic Swing Bridge Opens Frequently During Summer".

7. Next Steps

Discussion followed in regard to various items: bed and breakfast law to be sent out by Ms. Ziobron to all members; letters from the selectmen of both towns as well as both EDC's regarding the opening of the bridge; Ms. Ziobron will follow up with Mr. Colegrove regarding the bridge walkway; and tourism – plotting points of interest for day trips in Haddam and East Haddam on Google Maps and linking to town websites and the possibly slogan "Visit the Haddams".

8. Future Meeting Date

Discussion followed in regard to scheduling of the next meeting sometime in April. Will review when school vacations are scheduled in respective towns. Will also try to have both selectmen attend the April meeting. Ms. West suggested a "meeting" during an event in order to exchange ideas if a formal meeting is difficult to schedule.

9. Adjournment

MOTION: Heather Batzner made a motion to adjourn. Dave Papallo seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk