

**TOWN OF HADDAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING
HADDAM YOUTH CENTER
Wednesday, 12 October 2010, at 7:00 PM
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Change by the Commission***

X	Heather Batzner
X	Joseph Bergin
X	Dan Dachelet
X	Barbara Fernandez
X	Michael Fortuna, Chairman
X	Peter Gillespie
A	Lori Maggi
X	David Papallo
X	Edward Vynalek
X	Tom Gidius, EDC Coordinator
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

1. Call to Order

Mr. Fortuna called the meeting to order at 7:19 p.m.

2. Attendance

Attendance was taken.

3. Approval of Agenda

Approved as submitted.

4. Approval of Minutes

Tabled.

5. Old Business

a. EDC Coordinator – Introduction

Mr. Gidius stated he's made some revisions to the EDC's link on the town's website and asked the Commissioners to review and provide comments. Mr. Gidius stated there's a link to the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) which shows available commercial properties and that this is a way in which the town can assist with commercial properties that are available within the town. Mr. Gidius also stated that the town currently is not paying dues to CERC and that this maybe a matter for the Commission to discuss.

Mr. Gidius stated he's available in the mornings at the Town Office Building and can be reached by phone (860-345-8531 Ext. 214), by email (EDC@Haddam.org), or by stopping in.

Mr. Gidius stated he has meet Andy Becker, legal counsel for Rossi Corp., and has toured the Rossi property. Mr. Gidius also stated he has introduced himself to Liz Bazazi, Lisa Wadge, and the staff of The Saybrook at Haddam. Mr. Gidius informed the Commission that Tim Holton has expressed interest in opening a coffee roaster business as a part-time endeavor and he's looking at the vacant portion of the dry cleaners in the Higganum Center.

In regard to the new pharmacy, Mr. Gidius stated the owners, who have a little chain of small independent pharmacies, are hoping to open by the end of the month next to Shearmatrix. Mr. Gidius stated he has introduced the owners to members of the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Papallo asked how The Saybrook at Haddam was doing. Mr. Gidius stated much better with 41 of the 80 units occupied. Mr. Gidius stated that the owners have discussed converting one of the wings for an Alzheimer wing. Ms. Fernandez stated they will need to change their certification; however, it's a good income stream.

Mr. Vynalek asked Mr. Gidius if he had spoken to anyone from East Haddam as they're concerned about Tylerville. Mr. Gidius stated he had spoken to East Haddam's EDC Coordinator, Melissa Ziobron, and that matter was not addressed; however, when he spoke to Lisa Wadge, she did address the water issue.

Mr. Vynalek asked about the scheduling of another joint meeting with East Haddam. Mr. Fortuna stated the quarterly meeting, which is past due, was to be held by East Haddam. Mr. Fortuna will contact Ms. Ziobron in regard to this.

Mr. Papallo asked if there has been any discussion in regard to CVS coming to town. Mr. Gidius stated when he spoke to Andy Becker, Rossi Corp., he was shown a plan for a major pharmacy, but apparently that has gone away.

Mr. Fortuna stated the owners of the new pharmacy are interested in the Rossi property for a larger pharmaceutical production facility for distribution to all of their pharmacies as well as a small production lab. This proposal could be developed in accordance with the Village Zoning Regulations.

Mr. Dachelet asked about the property north of the Dunkin Donuts on Rte. 154. Mr. Fortuna stated a Subway would be going in. Mr. Dachelet stated he had heard a bank and Jameson Martin, a 2,000 sq. ft. high end restaurant, would also be going in. Mr. Fortuna stated the bank and restaurant would be a Phase 3 and 4 of the project. Mr. Gidius stated it was his understanding that the original permits had run out and the property owner will need to go back for land use approvals. Mr. Gidius also stated there may be a potential water problem with the site, but was unclear as to what that problem may be. Mr. Vynalek stated the soil will not allow for adequate drainage.

Mr. Dachelet informed the Commission that there will be a soft opening of J. Martin's, Rte. 81, on Thursday, 10/14/2010.

Mr. Gidius stated he had been contacted by a Haddam resident in regard to why the town only allows bed and breakfast's (B & B's) with two rooms. Mr. Gidius stated he did review the zoning regulations, but asked for the Commission's input. Mr. Fortuna stated he believed there was an issue with the building codes being at odds with each other. Mr. Gidius stated he will check with surrounding towns to see how they handle B & B's.

Ms. Fernandez stated there are a number of things to look at, but, in her opinion, the two main things that concern her are 1) water and 2) sewer. Ms. Fernandez stated it would be difficult for a bed and breakfast to operate efficiently without either component. Liz Bazazi, Higganum Vision Group (HBG) stated HVG would love to have B & B's within the town. Discussion followed. Mr.

Gillespie suggested Mr. Gidius contact Geoff Colegrove, former Haddam town planner, Midstate Regional Planning Agency, in regard to the history of this issue.

b. Sewer Project - Power Point Presentation to BOS – Update and c. Tylerville - Water

Mr. Fortuna stated he would combine discussion of the infrastructure projects together.

Mr. Fortuna stated he felt the presentation was well received by the BOS, but less so by the Board of Finance (BOF). Mr. Fortuna stated the BOS packaged all three infrastructure projects – transfer station, Tylerville water, and Higganum Center sewer – together; however, the transfer station is now off the table. Ms. Batzner stated at the public hearing there was an overwhelming lack of support and in a conversation that she had with Paul DeStefano, first selectman, he had indicated the issue wasn't worth pursuing. A brief discussion followed in regard to curbside pick up and how bulky waste will be disposed of (unknown at this time).

In regard to the water issue, Mr. Gidius stated that the Towns of Haddam and Chester each applied for \$500,000 grants, but received only \$250,000 each. Mr. Fortuna stated that in an email which was forwarded to him from the first selectman, it appears as if this project may not take place.

Mr. Fortuna stated although he can respect the BOS's decision, something needs to be done. Discussion followed as to whether or not the Commission felt they should go ahead with an informational public hearing to inform the townspeople of the consequences of the lack of infrastructure. Mr. Fortuna stated even though there can be a nice village with businesses which will come and go, without infrastructure there is no economic development opportunity. However, if the Commission is trying to affect the tax basis to stem the raising tide of taxes, there needs to be infrastructure.

Discussion followed in regard to some residents in town wanting to keep Haddam a sleepy little town. Mr. Fortuna stated the only way to keep Haddam a sleepy little town is to develop the village centers; otherwise, there will be sprawl. Ms. Bazazi stated the Commission needs to look at HVG's survey because most people do want viable villages (controlled development) and encouraged Commissioners to attend the next visioning session (Thursday, 10/21/2010).

Mr. Dachelet stated an article in the Haddam Bulletin as well as information on the EDC website would be good places to start to inform the townspeople. Ms. Bazazi stated it's important to make note of the potential for sprawl in the article. Mr. Dachelet also mentioned the creation of a two page white paper containing bullet points. Mr. Bergin stated establishing talking points would be beneficial and attend as many meetings as possible.

Ms. Fernandez asked Mr. Gidius what can be placed on the website such as the power point presentation. Mr. Gidius stated whatever the Commission would like to see on the site.

Mr. Fortuna provided the Commissioners with the following information: In 2007 Haddam had \$44 million in retail sales, excludes real estate; 3.2% of the state's total retail sales; with only .8% land area. In 1987 Haddam had a 58% commercial tax base, the majority of which was Connecticut Yankee (CY) and Rossi Corp., and in 2009 it had dropped to 23%. There currently is 24% vacant land in Haddam with only .7% zoned commercial which is mostly within the villages.

Mr. Gillespie asked the position of the first selectman. Mr. Fortuna stated Mr. DeStefano understands the need for the sewers. Mr. Gidius stated there's the lending component – low interest subsidized loan is available at this time, but may not be available at a later date. Further discussion followed in regard to the loan.

Discussion followed in regard to how much it will cost per household. Mr. Fortuna stated he didn't know how to run the numbers and was hoping the BOF would be of help in that area. Mr. Gilles-

pie stated he will work up the numbers for the sewer project and have them available for the November meeting. Ms. Fernandez stated a good marketing technique will be to state "We can build controlled development, build our tax base for the cost of dinner once a year". Mr. Fortuna will have a draft article for the Haddam Bulletin available for review at the November meeting.

Discussion followed in regard to Haddam not learning from other town's mistakes such as Chester, East Haddam, and Old Saybrook in regard to infrastructure. Ms. Bazazi asked why the sewer project isn't being pushed through. Mr. Fortuna stated costs alone would put businesses out of business as there aren't enough people who could connect to the system as it's proposed to lower fees. Ms. Fernandez stated it wouldn't be economical. Mr. Fortuna also stated not all business owners want to expand their businesses. Ms. Bazazi stated with a sewer, business owners would be able to sell some of their property to offset costs. Ms. Bazazi asked about tax incremental financing, which Mr. Gidius explained, but is not relevant to the sewer project. Ms. Bazazi stated she had spoken to developers what would entice them is a plan that the community and town were behind. Mr. Fortuna stated the sewer project is the plan as well as in the Zoning Village Regulations. Ms. Bazazi talked about developing a schematic plan for a private property. The Commission stated it's inappropriate to plan for a property that isn't owned by the town and that the property owner isn't involved in. Mr. Papallo asked if there are developers who are interested in developing within the town, why they have not come to the town to discuss the issue.

Mr. Gillespie asked if there was concern in regard to political fallout. Mr. Fortuna stated he is concerned, but if the project is put on the shelf, it will be forgotten, and the process will need to begin again (more time and money). Mr. Papallo stated he has serious concerns regarding P&Z in light of what he heard discussed at an outside meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

a. New EDC Projects/Initiatives/Discussion

Emails - Ms. Batzner stated she had spoken to Mr. DeStefano in regard to the use of personal emails in light of the scandal in the Town of East Hampton and the possible issuance of town sanctioned emails for commissioners. Ms. Batzner stated Mr. DeStefano is concerned about commission members using their personal emails. Mr. Fortuna stated he's comfortable with Mr. Gidius having a town email and the Commission can work through him.

Taxable Businesses - Mr. Fortuna stated he has been approached by several people in regard to some businesses in town that are not being taxed and are underbidding legitimate contractors. Mr. Gillespie stated the assessor, who would be directed by the selectmen, would know how to approach this issue. Mr. Fortuna stated it is unclear as to whether the assessor is already aware of this matter. This matter to be discussed further.

MOTION: Mike Fortuna made a motion to adjourn. Dave Papallo seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned 8:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 7:00 p.m.