

**TOWN OF HADDAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
COMMUNITY CENTER
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441
WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2022
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

X	Kate Anderson, Chairman
A	Cortney Emschwiller Swokla
X	Mike Farina
A	David Law
X	Mark Lundgren
A	Robin Munster
A	John Pember
X	Doreen Staskelunas, Secretary
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

Guests: Bob Casner, Chairman, East Haddam EDC, and Mike Karam.

1. Call to Order

Ms. Anderson, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was recited.

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Mike Farina motioned to approve the 14 December 2022 agenda as submitted. Mark Lundgren second. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Presentation – Bob Casner, Chairman, East Haddam EDC – Proposed Bike Trail

Mr. Casner introduced himself and stated that he's proud that the two towns are working together with the newspaper (Haddam and East Haddam News). Mr. Casner stated the work on Bridge Road is very impressive and will make the area more inviting and briefly discussed East Haddam's attempts at new development in the Goodspeed area. Mr. Casner also stated he would like to continue working to develop relationships between the two towns' EDCs. Mr. Casner distributed copies of East Haddam's Visitor's Guide.

Mr. Casner stated the East Haddam EDC looked into how to connect some of the assets along Town Street/Route 82 (Gillette's Castle, Nature Conservancy property, Chapman's Pond, historical houses owned by the Connecticut Landmarks Group, the Staehly Farm and Wolf's Den). In an attempt to get people out either by bicycle or by foot, they have started with the development of a separate path off of the main highway (approximately 6 feet wide). Mr. Casner stated he had viewed places, such as the Smokey Mountains, that have done this and it appears to be working quite well as they have made it very scenic/attractive by working the pathway into other areas. The Connecticut Landmarks Group wanted to become a part of the community and have joined up (own historic houses all around the state, have grant writers on staff, wonderful partner to have). An application was made to the National Park Service to see

if they would assist in designing the pathway as they have a division call the River Trails and Conservation Group. Mr. Casner stated they have met with the National Park Service people and they felt the proposal had some real assets as it goes to the Connecticut River and will have something that is recreational.

Using a map, Mr. Casner showed the Commission the area being proposed for the route – start at Gillette's Castle, go over the Swing Bridge, through Tylerville, down to Chester, return using the Ferry, and back to the Castle. Mr. Casner stated there are some missing pieces to get over to the Castle, but that can be addressed as they work on the project. Mr. Casner also stated that he has met with Chester's EDC who will be joining up with the project as well as having met with the Council of Governments (COG) whose traffic engineers have looked at the proposal and believe it's a great connection.

Mr. Casner stated he's not familiar with any of the assets or public lands that may be along Route 154 in Haddam that could be added to the experience of the bike path. Mr. Lundgren recommended the Chester Boat Launch. Mr. Casner asked about the plans for the Tylerville area noting that Bridge Road is very narrow.

Ms. Anderson asked if a bicycle route is being proposed on the existing portion of Route 154 or if a separate dedicated bicycle or pedestrian path is being considered. Ms. Anderson voiced concern over vehicular speed on Route 154 and would not feel comfortable in promoting bicycle traffic.

Using the map, Mr. Casner stated that was a problem East Haddam had on Route 82 and have made a path off of the road (had ability to do so due to huge right-of-way). An area of Route 151 was pointed out noting the huge right-of-way there also. Mr. Casner stated they currently see using the existing pavement and widening where need be.

Discussion followed in regard to the use of the railroad tracks. Mr. Casner stated they did speak to DEEP and there is an agreement between DEEP, who owns the track, and the Essex Stream Train, who leases the track, and they would permit the use but the path must stay a specific distance away from the tracks and some places do not allow for it. A brief discussion followed about restriping Route 154 with a bike path as well as ways to calm traffic down. Mr. Casner noted that a DOT traffic engineer has reviewed the sites and is aware of what the possibilities are.

Mr. Casner stated four public hearings have been conducted with various degrees of attendance, which have worked out well. Working with COG who is extremely supportive and where the grants will have to go through. Mr. Casner noted that DOT would like to see a bike path in this area.

Mr. Casner stated having the National Park Service assisting in this matter allows for federal funding. Mr. Casner also stated he's very hopeful that the grants will be obtained and the project will move forward. Mr. Casner would like to have the support of the Town of Haddam and Haddam's EDC as well as the Town of Chester and their EDC and believes EDC is a good place to work with this project.

Mr. Casner noted that the proposed loop is 18 miles and eventually would like to get down into the Town of Lyme along Route 156.

Mr. Lundgren spoke in regard to the website HaddamTrails.org and that perhaps the bike path could be added to it. Unclear who the administrator of the site is.

Mr. Casner asked the Commission to look at Route 154 (from Bridge Road south to the Chester town line) and see what might be available space wise and asset wise as well as Bridge Road.

Mr. Farina spoke about a narrow strip of land between Eagle Landing and the Riverhouse that may be a potential route. Mr. Farina pointed it out on the map. A brief discussion followed regarding the terrain and watercourse(s) and Mr. Warner being interested in creating a pocket park in the area. Mr. Casner will contact Mr. Warner.

MOTION: Mark Lundgren motioned that the Haddam Economic Development Commission endorse the proposed Connecticut River Heritage Recreation Loop as presented by Bob Casner. Mike Farina second. Motion carried unanimously.

The Commission felt it was a great project that Mr. Casner had started and would like to be a part of it.

Mr. Casner asked the Commission if there was anything at this time that they would like him to incorporate into the map. Mr. Farina spoke about a parking/viewing area that will be developed off the Route 82 Connector by the Clark Creek Falls. Mr. Lundgren suggested the addition of the boat launch.

Ms. Anderson asked where the map was currently posted. Mr. Casner stated on [RiverCOG.org](https://www.rivercog.org). Mr. Casner stated he expects something back from the Park Service sometime in April 2023 and would like to come back before the Commission in May 2023.

5. Public Comment

Ms. Anderson read a letter from Peter Baird, Chairman, Haddam Democratic Town Committee HDTC), dated 16 November 2022, regarding two events that took place at the Fall Festival (copy attached). Ms. Anderson stated she had not personally spoken to Mr. Baird regarding the letter; however, she did have comments related to EDC as well as her personal involvement in the Fall Festival.

Ms. Anderson stated that EDC sponsored the band for the tractor parade and that was EDC's sole involvement in the Fall Festival.

Ms. Anderson agreed that the tractor parade should not have allowed political signs. Ms. Anderson stated she was not there at the start of the event due to a family emergency; however, had she been, she would have suggested the signs be taken down.

Ms. Anderson stated as a whole, EDC did not contact anyone and the organizers of the Fall Festival did not solicit involvement from town groups for the event, but rather were approached by town groups that would like to participate. The organizers did contact the businesses in town to see if they would like to be involved.

Ms. Anderson disagreed with the statement "a business that is openly tied to the Haddam Republicans had set up a booth". Unclear where this statement came from as the individual is a business owner in town and is not part of a political town committee. Ms. Anderson explained that this individual indicated he would like to sell hot dogs, but was advised there was a vendor doing so and was asked to select another product.

Ms. Anderson stated she was personally involved in organizing the Trunk or Treat event. While setting up for this event, Ms. Anderson noticed the business owner in question setting up his hot dog cart and advised the coordinators of the Fall Festival. At no point was anyone approached either in person or via electronic notification that the Democrats were there on Saturday night and were upset that they couldn't set up their booth. Ms. Anderson stated the other organizers thought she had misunderstood what the set up would be. The reason why no one was fore warned that the business in question was at the event was due to none of the organizers being aware of it or that there was a problem.

Lastly, they were criticized by the Haddam Republican Town Committee (HRTC) for not being there. Unclear where that comment came from because the HRTC did not put out any public statements to that effect.

Ms. Anderson stated she is aware that in the future, the organizers of this event will no longer have any political groups involved whatsoever. This appears to be the most fair and easiest way to deal with this matter. At the end of the day, this event was for the community and almost \$7,000 was raised that went back to the food and fuel bank.

Ms. Anderson stated she will follow up with Mr. Baird regarding the letter. Ms. Anderson asked if anyone had any comments about the letter or the Fall Festival.

Mr. Farina stated this was a first-time event and when he saw the tractor, he thought it was a little over the top with the political signs (also this is a matter of opinion), but at the end of the day it wasn't going to make or break anything. Let it happen and make adjustments, if needed, for next year's event.

Mr. Lundgren stated the second paragraph in the letter is not true. Mr. Lundgren stated he wanted to keep the tractor parade as redneck as possible with as few rules as possible other than safety rules and things happen a week before an election. Mr. Lundgren stated he was approached by Chuck Cook, original organizer of the Haunted House, if hot dogs could be added to the HRTC menu as he never received a response from the HDTC and he couldn't get a food truck; however, once he (Lundgren) found out that the HDTC planned on serving hot dogs, he eliminated hot dogs from the HRTC menu. Mr. Lundgren stated it was explained that either the tattoo store or the gun store contacted Haddam Youth and Family Services and they invited them to use their tent.

Ms. Anderson stated she spoke to Lionheart Militia and they were told somebody would be selling hot dogs and were asked to think of something else. Ms. Anderson also stated that when she left, Lionheart had something else on the menu. Mr. Lundgren stated Ms. Anderson could not control what transpired. Ms. Anderson agreed.

Mr. Lundgren stated a number of the participants of the tractor parade had breakfast in town, which was what was hoped for; and probably there should be some police presence next year for traffic control. Mr. Farina stated the Festival should be held again and lessons learned from the first event should be used to make next year's event better. All Commissioners agreed that what took place was not Ms. Anderson's fault nor are all of the comments factually correct.

Mike Karam agreed that if an EDC or town event is going to be held, then out of fairness both political parties should be involved and that wasn't case. Ms. Anderson stated HDTC was invited. Mr. Karam clarified that he meant the tractor parade. Mr. Lundgren stated Mr. Karam is confusing the two events – the tractor parade and the Fall Festival – and that the tractor parade was non-political unless a participant wanted to have a sign because there were no rules against it. Mr. Karam asked if it was an EDC event. Ms. Anderson stated EDC paid for the band that played on the Green between the tractor parade and the festival. Mr. Farina stated one person needs to act as a clearing house for the event or there have to be committees formed.

Mr. Karam stated he believes Mr. Baird thought he had communicated through EDC via Ms. Anderson that they would be selling hot dogs at an EDC sponsored event – Fall Festival, and then it couldn't happened. Mrs. Staskelunas believes Mr. Baird sent the letter to her and Ms. Anderson because he thought the event was EDC sponsored, which was not the case. Mr. Lundgren stated it was a Lions Club event. Ms. Anderson stated she would like to speak directly to Mr. Baird to explain that some of what's in his letter is misdirected to the wrong group and there's clearly a lot of misunderstanding floating around about what happened.

6. New Business

a. Discussion on Volunteer Planning for Town Sponsored Event

Ms. Anderson reported on the following:

Holiday Pop-Up Market – Last week for the Market which has been quite successful. Kristin Melnick has done a great job!

Tylerville Tree Lighting – The event took place on Saturday, 3 December 2022, and was very nice.

Decorate Streetscape and Gazebo – Thank you to Mr. Law and Mrs. Staskelunas for decorating the gazebo and to Public Works for decorating the streetscape.

Removal of Decorations – Gazebo - Tentative date of Sunday, 15 January 2023. **Streetscape** – Will discuss with Public Works. Further discussion on this matter will take place at the 11 January 2023 meeting.

Tree for the Gazebo – The original tree has seen better days and a new one is needed. Higganum Hardware can provide a tree similar to the existing one for under \$300.

MOTION: Kate Anderson motioned to spend up to \$300 to replace the tree at the gazebo. Doreen Staskelunas second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Farina asked if the streetscape lighting could remain up until at least the end of January noting how dark the Center is without the lights. Ms. Anderson will speak to Chris Corsa, Assistant Director of Public Works, regarding a timetable for removal.

b. Updates

Ms. Anderson reported on the following:

Rossi Property – The Town has received a \$1.5 million cleanup grant from DECD.

HES – No news regarding the Community Challenge Grant. Noted this is a very competitive grant. Architect is working on the redesign of the roof. Unfortunately parts of the roof are in worse shape than thought. Taking a hard look at what can be salvaged and what needs to be replaced. Playground was removed by Public Works as well as the fencing along Rossi. Believe there will be some community vision sessions conducted in terms of what types of playground equipment, etc., should go there.

Higganum Cove – The Higganum Cove Master Plan has received an award from the Connecticut Chapter of the Planning Association. The award will be presented on Friday, 16 December 2022, in Middletown.

Scovil Hoe – The town now owns the property. Parker Benjamin is currently soliciting for businesses for the buildings. Clean up should begin in 2023, likely in the spring.

Haddam Center and Bridge Road Sidewalks – Projects are nearly done. The mailbox that sat in the middle of the sidewalk in Tylerville has been moved. DOT is looking for safety railing due to a significant drop off along Bridge Road.

Beaver Meadow Road Culvert Project – Beaver Meadow Road is opened.

Saybrook Road Bridge Project (Haddam/Middletown town line) – Project is complete.

Blueway Commons – The apartments are open and the first tenant will be moving in this week. Actively looking to fill leases. Jeff Hartmann, owner, received P&Z approval for the addition of a maintenance shed and pickle ball courts (residents only).

P&Z Proposed Retail Building – There were serious concerns regarding the proposed application and the applicant's attorney withdrew the application at the 3 November 2022 public hearing. The applicant's representatives considered comments made at the public hearing and have resubmitted their application. The matter will be heard on Thursday, 5 January 2023. The Town's staff will be taking a hard look at the site plan. Discussion followed at length regarding regulations and ordinances. Ms. Anderson will ask Mr. Warner to attend the 11 January 2023 meeting.

Merchant House – Tenant has not been around. Appears as if there is some work taking place on the building – perhaps a new roof.

Shad Museum – Mr. Karam asked the status of the relocation of the shad museum. Ms. Anderson stated as far as she knows it is still taking place. The Historical Society is responsible for the first move.

Community Septic System – Project is moving along slowly. There was a hang up between DOT and Dept. of Public Health (DPH), but believe it has been sorted out.

Paramount Treatment Center, 7 Island Dock Road – Mr. Warner provided an update via an email from owner. The company has received the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) but noted this is the worst time of year to open a rehab center as people and families do not like to be in a center. Currently have a skeleton crew on staff and a couple of patients at the facility.

Brewery, Higganum – The project still moving forward.

Citizens Bank – Unclear what is happening.

Bakery, Tylerville – Mr. Farina stated he had heard there is a bakery going in where the Cooking Company used to be. Ms. Anderson stated she thought it was a deli. Ms. Anderson will reach out to Lisa Wadge and provide an update at the January meeting.

Morina, Tylerville – Heard the food is good and the place is busy.

c. Budget and 2022/2023 Goals and Strategic Plan

Copies of the latest budget runoff distributed to the Commission. EDC is on track with their budget. Also, budget requests are due next month. Mr. Karam suggested increases be considered as the POCD Implementation Committee (PIC) will be making recommendations that EDC take over as lead on additional Action Items. Ms. Anderson stated she will be requesting some increases as well as some changes in line items – Fall Festival (own line item) and Flags along Route 154 (increase and place holiday decorations in that line item). Noted that there are 18 new light poles in Tylerville that will need decorations next year. Ms. Anderson will speak to the Tylerville businesses to see if they would like the same decorations as Higganum Center or something different.

Mrs. Staskelunas asked who would be responsible for taking care of the Christmas lights that are not working. Mrs. Batzner stated Public Works is aware that some of the lights are not working and an electrician would be needed.

d. EDC Membership Openings

Mike Karam has expressed interest in joining the Commission. Ms. Anderson suggested Mr. Karam submit a letter to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and they will appoint him to the Commission.

7. Old Business

Ms. Anderson reported on the following:

a. Fall Festival – Follow Up

Ms. Anderson stated the event was wildly successful; almost too successful with the amount of people showing up for the evening activities. Mr. Farina stated perhaps additional planning and more volunteers are needed; and if looking for food, perhaps contacting the churches to open up booths may help. Mr. Karam stated making the event non-political is smart as it's a town event. Mrs. Staskelunas stated there

needs to be an umbrella group that the sub-groups coordinate with. Ms. Anderson stated she looks at the Lions Club being the head of the event as they hold the insurance.

Mrs. Staskelunas asked what would be the best way to move forward in order to have a cohesive group. Ms. Anderson stated that the main organizers of the event are: Chuck Cook, Chelsea and Ryan Cleveland, Frank Mucciariaro, Mark Lundgren (tractor parade), Sarah Chambers (Women's Club), and herself. A debrief meeting has been held and it's unclear where the event will be held next year as the Scovil buildings will be under construction and a special permit would be required from the fire marshal to hold the event in HES (in discussions with the fire marshal). A lot of planning will need to take place.

b. Tylerville Construction Planning Updates – Continued Discussion

Ms. Anderson reported on the following:

Swing Bridge – DOT has installed cameras. Communication has been good.

c. Articles for HK News

Editors reached out to see if there were any articles the Commission would like to submit.

d. Website Updates

This would be a good winter project.

7. Chairman's Report

Ms. Anderson reported on the following:

Personnel Openings –**Social Services Director** – Actively interviewing. **Senior Center Coordinator** – Actively soliciting for the position. **Animal Control Officer** – Position to be posted.

Beautification Committee - Mr. Karam stated he met with Bob McGarry, First Selectman, and Bill Warner, Town Planner, about forming an unaffiliated beautification committee for Haddam. Will begin to raise funds this spring and get volunteers to work with businesses as well as speaking to landscapers and nurseries to donate mulch, etc. Mrs. Staskelunas asked if the Garden Club had been contacted. Mr. Karam stated he will contact them. Mr. Farina suggested a maintenance crew be a part of the committee.

9. Approval of Minutes – 14 September 2022, 12 October 2022, and 16 November 2022 - Cancelled

The Commission tabled the approval of the 14 September 2022 and 12 October 2022 minutes.

Recording Clerk's Note: The 16 November 2022 meeting was cancelled.

9. Adjournment

MOTION: Doreen Staskelunas motioned to adjourn. Mike Farina second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bunny Hall Batzner
Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 11 January 2023.