

**TOWN OF HADDAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
COMMUNITY CENTER
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441
WEDNESDAY, 8 JANUARY 2020
APPROVED MINUTES
*Approved as Amended at the 11 March 2020 Meeting***

ATTENDANCE

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| X | Prem Aithal, Vice Chairman |
| X | Kate Anderson, Chairman |
| X | Mike Farina |
| X | David Law (Arrived 6:16 p.m.) |
| X | Cindy MacNeil Sola |
| X | Doreen Staskelunas, Secretary (Arrived 6:13 p.m.) |
| X | Courtney Emschwiller Swokla (via telephone) |
| X | Robert McGarry, First Selectman |
| X | Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk |

Regular Business Meeting

1. Call to Order

Ms. Anderson, chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was recited.

Ms. Anderson thanked everyone for accommodating the earlier start time.

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Prem Aithal motioned to approve the 8 January 2020 agenda as submitted. Cindy Sola second. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment

Mucket Day – Mark Lundgren distributed copies of a proposal for Mucket Day (Exhibit A – 5 pages; copy on file in the Town Clerk's Office). Mr. Lundgren stated that he is proposing the event on the third Saturday in August for the following reasons – 1) it is one of the two driest months of the year and 2) everything is proposed for outdoors.

Mr. Lundgren explained what a sprint triathlon is (outlined on pages 3-4 of the handout) noting that the Town of Chester at Cedar Lake held one on every Tuesday night and that it became so popular that they had to restrict the event to 100 participants. Mr. Lundgren stated the Reservoir is one-half mile long and proposes the swim to start and end at Girl Scout Point (circular parking area at the end of Hull Avenue); bicycles staged in the parking area to go on an approximately 12 mile route ending in the area of the Green which would also be the start/finish of a 5K run. It should take approximately two hours from start to finish.

Mr. Lundgren talked about Hidden Lake's annual tractor parade and apologized for the quality of the copied photo (page 5). Mr. Lundgren stated there were 46 tractors at the parade.

Mr. Lundgren stated the reason for putting so much in one day is the bigger the better and it spreads the cost (port-o-potties, shuttles, police, tents, etc.). Would also like to include food trucks, bands playing in the early afternoon (would like to supply the equipment a band would need to set up such as amps, microphones, and drum set), may have some financial backing (seed money) for the event and would like to see the event be self-supporting. Mr. Lundgren spoke in regard to the need for project and assistant project managers with the assistant being the treasurer and there would be key people for each event as well as sponsors. Mr. Lundgren stated he was opened to suggestions.

Mr. Lundgren further spoke in regard to contacting St. Peter's Church about using their parking area for the staging area for the triathlon and tractor parade; camp sites for triathletes (recommended allowing Little City Campground to expand beyond their actual footprint for tent sites for one weekend only for this event, if possible); and the night before a St. Arnold Festival Day (saint of beer) with spaghetti dinner and brewery and beer outlets featured.

Mr. Lundgren noted that scheduling and sponsors will take time. Liz Bazazi stated that Peter Baird has been talking about something very similar to what Mr. Lundgren is proposing and suggested Mr. Lundgren contact Mr. Baird. Mr. Lundgren stated that Ann Faust, a resident, has organized a triathlon.

Ms. Anderson thanked Mr. Lundgren for making his presentation and for being so detailed. Ms. Anderson asked Mr. Lundgren if he were aware if permitting was required for any of these events such as the use of the reservoir, roadways, etc. Mr. Lundgren stated there would need to be permission from the State to use the reservoir and state roads and from the Town to use the town roads. Mrs. Swokla noted Youth and Family Services would have some of this information due to the Pumpkin Run. Also noted that there is a food truck even that's held at the middle school.

Ms. Anderson stated her only concern is the timing as it's close to River Days. Mr. Lundgren stated he considered it noting that there are four very large events shortly thereafter – Haddam Neck Fair, River Days, Grimm's Haunted House, and the Pumpkin Run and he doesn't see why they couldn't be promoted during Mucket Day. Mr. Aithal asked if this could be merged with River Days. Ms. Anderson stated River Days must be held on the first weekend (Saturday or Sunday) in September. Mrs. Munster stated River Days is controlled by the State DEEP (permit; grandfathered in; specific criteria). Discussion followed at length in regard to Mucket Day being three weeks before River Days; Essex holding an event at least once a month, if not weekly, in order to help downtown businesses; an event of this magnitude and variety would require coordination between committees beyond EDC such as Park and Rec, Youth & Family, etc.; possibly bringing the Mucket forward that weekend; and a 5K Butterfly Run scheduled for August at the middle school.

Ms. Anderson asked the Commission if they were o.k. with making this topic a primary agenda item in February. The Commission agreed.

Holiday Lighting – Mrs. Munster stated the holiday lights in the Center look wonderful. Mrs. Sola thanked Mr. Law and his son for decorating the gazebo. Mr. Aithal thanked John Swokla for all his help.

5. Approval of Minutes

The Commission agreed to table the approval of the 13 November 2019 minutes.

6. Old Business

a. Mucket - Update

Ms. Anderson reported that Art Wiknik has approved the revised rendering of the Mucket. Mrs. Sola passed around her phone to show a photo of the revision (the addition of irises to the eyes). Ms. Anderson will request a quote for the cost of a statue and shipping. A brief discussion followed regarding the statues size (life size) and location (unclear at this time).

b. Qigong

Mrs. Sola reported that she has spoken to Jessica Condil, Director of Senior and Social Services and Municipal Agent for the Elderly, in regard to the use of the Senior Center and a new location must be found as rent must now be paid. Mrs. Sola noted that word is getting out about this class and people are coming into town. Mr. Aithal asked if Haddam Elementary School (HES) could be used. Mrs. Sola stated a meeting has been scheduled to discuss the matter further with Mr. McGarry. Mr. McGarry stated the gym is being used and the all-purpose room was used for the pop up market; however, the town's in limbo has to whether it wants to do rentals or not. Mrs. Sola stated a classroom would be a good size noting that during the good weather perhaps classes could be held outside again, but there needs to be consistency (a permanent home). Classes will continue at the Senior Center until the end of January.

7. New Business

a. Budget

Ms. Anderson reported that the proposed 2020-2021 budget has been submitted and that a line item specific too the Farmers' Market has been added. Ms. Anderson stated that she felt the Commission is currently up-to-date with holiday decorations. A public presentation/town meeting regarding the 2020-2021 budget will be held in May.

b. Holiday Decorations – Pick Date to Take Down

All decorations to be taken down on Sunday, 12 January 2020, 7:30 a.m. In the event of inclement weather, Ms. Anderson will contact everyone via email.

c. Explore Connecticut Shoreline Membership

Ms. Anderson distributed a copy of an information outline for Explore Connecticut Shoreline (Exhibit B; copy on file in the Town Clerk's Office). Ms. Anderson reported that five towns have been approached to join - \$400 per town to sign up; that the website is very well setup/very image heavy; this is a promotional tool; and it's another marketing/advertising avenue. Ms. Anderson also reported that Mr. McGarry and she have both authorized this proposal. Ms. Anderson noted that Bill Warner, Town Planner, is spear-hearing this project.

Mr. Law asked Ms. Anderson if she's aware of the content of the site – do they create the content or can the Commission create something unique to Haddam. Ms. Anderson stated she believes Explore Connecticut is writing the information for Haddam as part of the five town package deal.

d. Charrette Results

Ms. Anderson reported that the presentation was held on Wednesday, 13 December 2019, was well attended, and the results of the charrette were not surprising. Due to the time, Ms. Anderson focused on EDC's 90 day agenda:

1) Form a Merchants Association. Ms. Anderson reported that she has a business owner who is will to run with this, but will confirm before announcing a name. Ms. Anderson noted that the East Haddam Business Association has offered their assistance in this matter. Mrs. Sola stated she felt it was important to approach the smaller and at home businesses as well as the bigger businesses. Mr. McGarry stated he has spoken to some of the business owners and there has been some push back in regard to time that will be taken away from their business. Mrs. Staskelunas stated there is someone within the Scovil Hoe Building who is interested in being a part of this. Mr. Aithal spoke in regard to the cost of being within a business association. Mr. Law asked if there would be an incentive to attract businesses to join. Mr. McGarry stated at least for the Higganum merchants they should have a voice of what happens in the Center.

2) Carefully review the findings of the report. Ms. Anderson reported that everyone in the group has shown their support for this project.

3) Host a meeting with Connecticut Main Street Center. Ms. Anderson stated she has reached out to them to see if they can do a presentation and she would like other committees/boards/commissions and civic groups to attend. Ms. Anderson also stated that the National Main Street Center is where EDC received the grant for the mucket statue.

4) Begin to establish a main street approach to revitalization. Ms. Anderson felt the meeting with Connecticut Main Street should be held before tackling this point.

Mr. Law pointed out that 90 days will take the Commission to spring time and believes there are little things that are vital to spurring everything on. Mr. Law stated the town should focus on what it currently has, such as reopening Higgies in Higganum and the Pilot House in Haddam as these two places cover either end of town, before focusing on building new.

Ms. Anderson noted that there will be a lot of overlap and some committees will need to work together.

8. Chairman's Report

Ms. Anderson reported on the following:

Pop Up Market – This was a great success! There are other ideas for the spring and looking forward to working with EDC.

P&Z – Application Updates – Day Care Center, 6 Brookes Court, Tylerville – This is in the early stages, but a conceptual plan was approved. More meetings ahead. **Wellness/Rehabilitation Center, 7 Island Dock Road, Haddam** – Text amendment and Zoning amendment approved for the former Marin building (across the street from the Haddam Meadows). This would be for a 36 bed, residential center for women only. High end.

Steady Habit, Saybrook Road, Higganum - Although things are going slower than the owners would like, things are moving forward. No grand opening date has been set as of this time.

Former Duffy's Pub, Killingworth Road, Higganum – Unclear who is working on this project. Will speak to Bill Warner, Town Planner, for an update.

Website Error – John Pember stated that he and Manny Caccomo had arrived at 6:25 p.m. as they were under the impression that the meeting would be starting at 6:30 p.m. per the public notice on the town's website. Mr. Pember also spoke in regard to the notice inviting people interested in joining the committee because there are vacancies. Mr. Pember asked if the meeting started at 6:30 p.m. or was it pushed up. Ms. Anderson stated the meeting was pushed up to 6:00 p.m. and apologized for the inconvenience.

EDC Membership – Ms. Anderson stated if anyone is interested in joining EDC, they must submit a formal request to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and encouraged individuals to also submit a resume outlining their background/qualifications for joining (next BOS meeting is scheduled for Monday, 13 January 2020). Those interested in volunteering: John Pember, Mary Hickish, and Manny (Emanuele) Caccomo.

Thinktank

Members of the Public Present: Mark Lundgren, Tanya Moriarty, Robin Munster, Mary Hickish, Liz Bazazi, Ian Gibson, Melissa Gibson, Gail Reynolds, Nick DiGoia, Joan Fox, John Pember, Manny Caccomo, and Pete DiGoia.

9. Higganum Farmers' Market

Mr. Aithal distributed copies of the Farmers' Market Thinktank Fact Sheet and Discussion Items and an updated outline pertaining to the market (Exhibit C – 2 pages and Exhibit D – 2 pages, respectively; copies on file in the Town Clerk's Office).

Mr. Aithal gave a brief overview of the market – started out strong, but weakened towards the end; however, as Mr. Lundgren had previously stated “you can never start too early”. Mr. Aithal stated he wants to do better with the market and is working to make it one of the best in the area.

Mr. Aithal stated there was a lot of feedback regarding the timing of the market and it was very confusing to people with it being every other week. Mr. Aithal also stated that moving to a weekly market is something EDC would like to do this year. There seemed to be no disagreement with those present and that consistency is very important. Ms. Bazazi talked about advertising and take aways (a small flyer with the dates of the market that can be placed on the refrigerator). Mr. Aithal noted the market was confined by the lack of a budget and EDC is looking at what it can do to raise funds to make it self-sustaining. Mrs. Fox spoke in regard to marketing – using the jail tour as an example with a full page ad in the Haddam Bulletin. Ms. Bazazi stated a market master is needed and the need to charge vendors for their space noting that it locks them in.

MOTION: Prem Aithal motioned to hold the Higganum Farmers' Market on a weekly basis during the 2020 season. Doreen Staskelunas second. Motion carried unanimously.

a. Start/End Dates of Market

Mr. Aithal reviewed the vendor survey results for start/end dates – 62 percent early June, 25 percent mid-June, and 12 percent end June and ending it around the same time as last year – first week in October. Mr. Aithal recommended starting the market the week of 15 June 2020 and ending it the week of 5 October 2020. Mr. Gibson stated this time frame would be the same footprint as Chester. Ms. Bazazi suggested an early spring season – lettuces and radishes – and include crafters/potters.

MOTION: Kate Anderson motioned to start the Higganum Farmers' Market on the week of 15 June 2020 and end it on the week of 5 October 2020 for a total of 17 weeks. Cindy Sola second. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Day of the Week/Time of the Market Weekly

Mr. Gibson stated Friday is a tough market day and also noted that it's a prep day for farmers who attend Saturday and Sunday markets. Mr. Aithal reviewed the dates of markets surrounding Higganum. Mr. Gibson stated markets ebb and flow. Mrs. Fox stated a number of people who attended the Higganum market commented that they thought it was a Friday market. Mr. N. DiGoia stated Saturday would be a good day noting that during the summer the Haddam Meadows will be open, bicyclists will be out, and the use of HES would help keep the market open during rainy days as well as all year round. Mr. Gibson asked if there's a reason why the school couldn't be used. Mr. McGarry stated part of the problem is security – once in the building, people would have free access to the entire building. Mr. N. DiGoia asked how security worked with the Christmas Pop Up Market. Mr. McGarry stated the town cannot isolate the levels of the school and that he had concerns about people wondering throughout the school. A brief discussion followed in regard to whether or not the doors could be updated to isolate specific areas.

Mr. Aithal returned the discussion to what day of the week to hold the market and let those in attendance know that the Commission had previously discussed the matter (felt it should be held on Fridays). Mr. Aithal also addressed those comments received during the meeting – noted that Saturday was not an option on the original survey. Mr. Aithal will put the survey back up with Friday from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Discussion followed in regard to the closing timing – not being open too late in the evenings as vendors have to breakdown, pack up, and travel home; East

Haddam's farmers' market being held on Saturdays and not doing well (inconsistencies); and possibly creating a subcommittee to run the market.

Mr. Aithal stated the key subcommittees that he would like to form for the market are: Website/Marketing and Theme Days – Ms. Anderson to be the lead; Vendor Recruitment/Entertainment – Mrs. Swokla to be the lead; Finance/Market Regulations and the Accessibility of Grants – Mr. Aithal to be the lead and to contact Jaime Smith DEEP; Website Creation/Management – own the rights to higgfarmersmarket.com; Weekly Operations/Logistics – location, parking, and weather – Mrs. Staskelunas to be the lead; and Vendor/Visitor Support. Discussion followed in regard to combining certain items and the need for vendors (need to remember more vendors are better and that vendors need to make money); and to consider calling those members, outside of EDC, who had been involved previously as well as other civic groups/residents to help with the market. A straw poll vote as to whether or not to hold the market on Friday or Saturday came out to a tie of 6-6 and it was decided an online survey will be conducted for one week only.

c. Resident and Vendor Surveys Results

Mr. Aithal reported he has conducted surveys on social media and has worked with this year's vendors. Mr. Aithal covered the following: 1) Marketing – better signage and bigger banners, more publicity regarding market dates, posters at the businesses, and the establishment of a subcommittee.

2) Incorporating other events – concerts or entertainment following the market, yoga on the green, kids' events, lawn games. Mrs. Reynolds noted that when she ran the farmers' market, community events often had their own food vendors and they didn't want the farmers' market there. Mr. Gibson stated it can get quite congested/hectic with a concert after a market – may need about a half hour gap between events. Mr. N. DiGoia stated HES would be a good location for the market as it would provide additional parking while providing space/distance from a concert on the green. Mr. Aithal stated it will be looked at for the upcoming season. Mr. N. DiGoia also suggested the use of the fields and basketball court for sporting events.

3) More Vendors – more food vendors, be more vendor friendly, free samples (noted that there are regulations regarding this), more farmers and local groups, food trucks, etc. Mrs. Fox stated she felt the Higganum Farmers' Market was the least restrictive of any that she was involved with last season. Discussion followed in regard to vendors having to be insured, food trucks previously not receiving enough business, having enough product to keep people coming back, and social interaction.

Ms. Anderson asked the vendors present if there was any type of vendor they would not want to accept at a farmers' market or should be open to everyone. The consensus seemed to be keeping it local and what people expect at a farmers' market. Mr. Aithal asked what's most important at a farmers' market – farms, food vendors and trucks, craft artisans vendors, bands and entertainment, and kids' activities. Also try to tie in vendors with a specialty market – demonstrations – and the need for advertising. Mrs. Reynolds reminded the Commission that the state has rules regarding farmers' markets.

4) Theme Days – dogs, bike decorating, circus, merchant, Christmas in July, etc.

5) Rain Locations – HES.

6) Preferred Date – 48 percent Friday, 26 percent Thursday, and 30 percent Wednesday. Mr. Aithal noted that the percentage would not be 100 percent as he allowed people to pick more than one day. Mr. Aithal stated there are compelling points to hold the market on the weekend. Mr. Gibson stated the original market's core group of customers weren't driving through, but were locals within a couple of miles of the market, typically the same group of people, a lot of retirees, and day neutral people. Mr. Gibson also stated there was a lot of advertising in the school and the market was more kid friendly. Again the social aspect came up.

d. Makeup of Market – Farms, Food Trucks, Vendors, Craft/Artisan Vendors, Kid’s Activities, Entertainment, Theme Days, Etc.

Ms. Bazazi suggested seasonal events – canning and cooking demonstrations. This item was previously discussed under Item c.

10. Adjournment

MOTION: Prem Aithal motioned to adjourn. Courtney Swokla second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bunny Hall Batzner
Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 12 February 2020.