

**TOWN OF HADDAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TOWN HALL
21 FIELD PARK DRIVE, HADDAM, CT 06438
WEDNESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2023
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

X	Kate Anderson, Chairman
A	Cortney Emschwiller Swokla
X	Mike Farina (Left at 7:40 p.m.)
X	David Law
X	Mark Lundgren (Left at 7:42 p.m.)
A	Robin Munster
X	John Pember
X	Doreen Staskelunas, Secretary
X	Bill Warner, Town Planner, AICP
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

Guests: Mike Karam, Kristy Benson Amarante, Jack Calhoun, Haddam Shad Museum Board of Directors, Lisa Malloy, Director, Haddam Historical Society, Kristin Melnick.

1. Call to Order

Ms. Anderson, chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was recited.

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: David Law motioned to approve the 8 February 2023 agenda as submitted. John Pember second. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment

There were no comments from those in attendance.

5. New Business

a. Future Use of HES – Schedule Community Workshop Dates with Bill Warner

Shad Museum – Relocation - Mrs. Malloy reported that the Shad Museum, founded by Dr. Joe Zaiantz in 1994, is dedicated to the history of shad fishing in the Connecticut River Valley, and contains a number of Haddam/Higganum related items. Mrs. Malloy stated the building was originally Bill Maynard's shad shack and was located across the street from its current location and has been moved three times. Dr. Zaiantz is in the process of selling the property and the museum needs to be moved (museum and its contents given to the Haddam Historical Society about 2.5 years ago). Mrs. Malloy stated they have been looking for a location to move the museum to for the past five years and last year it was suggested that it be moved to the Haddam Elementary School (HES). Mrs. Malloy stated she has been to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) who all support the project and now is seeking support from EDC.

Mrs. Malloy stated they are under the gun to move the structure (within the next eight weeks). The person moving the building is donating their services and they would like to get it done. Mr. Calhoun stated Dr. Zaiantz also has a potential buyer for the property in the spring and they would like to have the building moved before the sale is finalized.

Mrs. Malloy distributed/reviewed a handout pertaining to the history of the Shad Museum (copy on file with the minutes in the Town Clerk's Office and the Land Use Office). Mrs. Malloy explained that the structure does not have a foundation, basement, or running water, but will have electricity. The Haddam Historical Society will be solely responsible for insurance, electricity, and security for the museum as well as its contents. Noted that the Historical Society will probably enter into a lease agreement with the Town of Haddam for the space. Mrs. Malloy stated she would like to move the museum only once. Mr. Calhoun stated it would require a crane to move the building. Mr. Calhoun also stated the structure, less than 20 feet by 20 feet, is well built.

Mrs. Malloy stated HES would provide visibility, parking, and access to restrooms and would allow the museum to be even more successful than it already is. Mr. Calhoun stated although the museum has been around for some time, there are a number of people who are unaware of its existence. Mrs. Malloy stated the museum does get people from the northeast, as it's an important educational and historic component, and they are hoping to bring an educational program to the area school system. Mr. Calhoun spoke in regard to a study conducted by Texas Instruments pertaining to shad and the warm water generated by the former Connecticut Yankee Power Plant – shad will come up and mill about in the Essex area where the water is brackish, then proceed north, and when they would reach the warm water created by the power plant, the shad would dive underneath it and continue north up the river.

Mrs. Malloy stated shad has always been an important part of Haddam's history noting that Mr. Calhoun shad fished as a teenager. Mr. Calhoun stated most shad fishing is done at night.

Discussion followed in regard to how the museum would fit in with a playscape. Mrs. Malloy again stated it is an integral part of Haddam's history and educational component; and she will do her best to help make the museum fit in and work.

HES - Mr. Warner stated there have been a number of people interested in the HES site; and as the pandemic has wound down, there's been more interest in the use of the building (evolving into a community center). Mr. Warner reported the town has \$880,000 for a roof and a park at HES. Mr. Warner stated the roof on the oldest section of the school is in the best shape, the roof above the gym (1989) is very bad, and the roof above the multi-purpose room is an architectural shingle (2009).

Mr. Warner distributed/reviewed a handout outlining Haddam's demographics – low density town, 180 people per square mile. Spoke in regard to social isolation for seniors. An informal study conducted on Facebook as to what to do with HES provided the following results: 74 percent retain for community use; 75 percent a use that benefits the Center on nights and weekends; and 76 percent if sold or leased keep the grounds for community use. In order to understand the demographics, residents need to know that Haddam is losing school children (reviewed chart) – three percent are under five years old, 18 percent 5-17 years old, four percent 18-24 year olds, six percent 25-34 year olds, 33 percent 35-54 year olds, and seniors are staying (over 50 percent not in the productive age category). Mr. Warner stated the under 17 year olds will keep shrinking, but of those they may remember their town fondly and may want to come back and the Baby Boomers and Gen X want to age in place. In ten years Haddam will be a much older population with less school kids.

Mr. Warner distributed and reviewed a handout outlining Haddam's current facilities: Playscape on Jail Hill Road (very small and secluded, gated in the winter, have to park on Jail Hill and walk in, not large enough for a population of 8,000); Senior Center (2,100 square feet, built in 1867, very small kitchen, no room for expansion); Community Center (2,065 square feet, built in 1965, one room with a kitchen, no room for expansion); Social Services, food pantry, and clothes closet (1,500 square foot converted former

barn, many issues); and HK Rec and Youth and Family (losing their office space). Mr. Warner also reviewed what a multi-generation park should focus on – fitness, nature, inclusion to avoid social isolation (multi-use rooms).

Mr. Warner distributed/reviewed a handout outlining a July 2019 Facebook survey as to what to do with HES – over 100 responses received (shaded areas, playscapes, clean with garbage receptacles, access to bathrooms, bump track, dog park, splash pad, and pickle ball courts to name a few. Using an aerial site plan of HES, Mr. Warner pointed out the parking area, field, leaching fields, basketball court, swings, and main building. The old section of HES is 12,000 square feet and would hold all of Haddam's current facilities and the multi-purpose room should be retained for public functions.

Using another aerial overview, Mr. Warner reviewed potential options – trails (fitness trail around the playscape area and the entire perimeter of the property); playscape area – shad museum in the front corner closest to the church; pickle ball courts, middle field playscape area (do we need since the child population is going down), splash pad (unclear at this time how it works); bump track (behind HES in the big field; did look at Madison's bump track; very popular), dog park (large and small dogs); and skate park. Within the building a senior/community center; public functions. Pointed out the library and main office, the gym, and the new section (highly subsidized; potential small senior housing unit). The key to the whole thing is creating a community center that helps to create a more active center where people feel comfortable walking down into Higganum Center. Mr. Law will discuss the matter with Park and Rec.

Ms. Melnick stated it was her understanding that one of the classrooms has been taken over by emergency services. Mr. Warner stated there are a lot of rumors that the resident troopers will be moving into the former kindergarten room adjacent to the playground; however, there is no confirmation on the matter. Mr. Farina asked if the troopers had to find a new location quickly, would they be agreeable to using the Community Center. Mr. Warner stated the ideal area would be at the brick office building at Rossi.

Mrs. Staskelunas, Senior Center Activities Coordinator, asked Mr. Warner where he was envisioning placing the Senior Center. Using the map, Mr. Warner pointed out the older section of the school noting that it would be the best access as there are no steps. Mrs. Staskelunas stated she would need handicapped parking; and if serving meals, would need a kitchenette. Mr. Warner stated George Fellner, architect, who created the East Haddam Senior Center, looked at HES and estimated about \$800,000 would be needed to create a real senior center. Mrs. Staskelunas stated that was her concern as she does not want the seniors shoved off into a corner. Mr. Warner agreed; he would like to have it done right. Mrs. Staskelunas asked what would happen to the current Senior Center. Mr. Warner stated it would be sold.

Mr. Law stated there is an eight week time limit for the shad museum and asked if the fence could be pulled back to allow them access for placement of the structure. Mr. Warner stated yes.

Mrs. Malloy asked if the current funding is strictly for the play area. Mr. Warner stated no – \$400,000 for the roof and \$480,000 for roof and play area. A brief discussion followed in regard to funding not being available for the Senior Center.

Mr. Calhoun asked if the markings on the aerial map represented a walking path and stations where people could either sit or work out. Mr. Warner stated yes.

Ms. Anderson asked if there's concern about the type of ground the Shad Museum will be placed on. Mrs. Malloy stated they have been in contact with Bob Ruzzo, Building Inspector, numerous times and the proposed site is suitable.

Mrs. Malloy asked if a committee will be set up soon. Mr. Warner stated they had talked about having a committee or should it be run through EDC. Mrs. Malloy asked if she may have a voice in the matter. Mr. Karam asked if a professional recommendation on the placement of the museum should be gotten. Mrs.

Malloy stated a legitimate question, but visibility is the biggest concern; and they would like it up front, somewhat off by itself so it doesn't impact the rest of the plan, but not behind something so it's hidden. Mr. Warner stated it is unique incorporating an historic structure into a modern play area (would use a landscape architect to lay the area out). Mr. Karam asked if there would be access to the area from the sidewalk. Mr. Calhoun and Mrs. Malloy stated that would be an important component. Mr. Warner stated you want people to interact. Mr. Calhoun asked if HES was part of the Village District. Mr. Warner stated no, not from a zoning point of view. Mrs. Staskelunas asked if the fence would be removed. Mr. Warner stated the playscape would definitely have to be fenced.

Mr. Karam asked about the community septic system. Mr. Warner pointed the two areas out as well as the existing septic system and the wells. A brief discussion followed regarding the basketball courts with Mr. Warner stating the system will be designed to allow for pavement to be installed; currently doing groundwater monitoring (should be done by April and by May should have a good design for it). Mr. Law stated Park & Rec has had the basketball courts budgeted within their budget for the last 10 years or so as there was a plan to install a court at Great Hill, but there's ledge (may be able to realign funding).

Mr. Calhoun asked if the gym would be used in the winter time. Mr. Warner stated yes, as a lot of multi-generational parks have indoor activities (Zumba, cycling, fitness training, etc.).

Mr. Pember asked if the Community Center is used often. Ms. Anderson stated yes, Boy/Girl Scouts, Club 60, VFW, meetings, etc. Ms. Melnick stated fairs and markets have also been conducted at the Community Center. Ms. Benson Amarante stated a nice playscape will attract mommy groups. Mr. Karam stated a dog park will attract people as well. Discussion followed in regard to the younger Had-damites who do want to stay in town and are either living with their parents or renting from them and homes being sold and younger children coming in to town.

Mr. Law asked how the proposal will affect the Farmers' Market. Ms. Benson Amarante stated she would need a new home. Ms. Melnick asked if the Farmers' Market could be moved to another location on HES; and noted that she too would need a new home for the Holiday Pop Up Market. Mr. Warner stated people will need to change their mind set and begin to walk. Ms. Benson Amarante stated the Farmers' Market sets up in the HES parking lot. Discussion followed at length about revitalizing a downtown with pedestrian activity and visibility being a big draw.

Ms. Anderson requested that the tree on the HES playground remain. Mr. Warner stated the tree is dead or dying.

Grim's Haunted House - Mr. Lundgren stated with the development of Scovil Hoe, Grim's Haunted House will need to relocate and are looking at possibly using the gym; and asked Mr. Warner if it was possible. Mr. Warner stated the multi-purpose room is possible; however, the gym would need a modification from the state's fire marshal (noted because of the gym's size it would need to have a sprinkler system).

Pop Up Markets - Ms. Melnick asked if all that has been discussed comes to fruition and with the down-stairs rooms all being occupied, where will the Pop Up Market relocate too. Mr. Warner stated a building cannot be kept vacant for a block of weeks. Ms. Melnick understood. Mr. Warner stated there will need to be thought put into it – how's it going to be managed, who's going to run it – noted that the BOS approved \$15,000 to hire somebody to be there to at least open the building. Ms. Melnick asked if consideration is being made to keep space available for rental purposes. Mr. Warner stated that would be up to the community whether it's EDC, another committee that may evolve out of the workshops, etc.

Ms. Anderson asked if the property is still for sale. Mr. Warner stated it has been for sale for two years.

Ms. Anderson asked what happens after the community workshop(s) are conducted. Mr. Warner stated they would hire someone to come up with a plan (what uses would go where, a needs analysis, etc.).

Ms. Anderson asked if the intent would be to figure out what to do with the entire building. Mr. Warner stated it could be done in phases. Discussion followed – in a month should have a cost for the roofs, then see what's left for the outside play area, and then the next step would be planning for a Senior Center (could be obtained through STEAP grants).

MOTION: Kate Anderson motioned for EDC to endorse the relocation of the Haddam Shad Museum to the back corner of the playground of the former Haddam Elementary School. John Pember second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Calhoun asked if the Town had requested any portion of the building be reserved for itself. Mr. Warner stated no. Ms. Anderson stated Park & Rec and Youth & Family Services have.

Mr. Karam asked if the Connecticut River Museum held any interest in the museum or a connection to the Historical Society. Mrs. Malloy stated the Connecticut River Museum is their friend, but that the Shad Museum is a quirky, quaint, collection of shad items.

Mr. Calhoun stated the best restaurants in Connecticut, up until about 25 years ago, were advertising shad when the shad came in, but somehow it has lost its way. Mr. Calhoun stated they do get professors who come in to view the items.

Mr. Karam asked about signage. Mr. Calhoun stated the sign is nice, but it's hard to see. Mrs. Malloy stated Dr. Zaiantz only has the museum open during shad season (April, May, and the first two weeks of June) and that the sign is basically a sandwich board (do not need lighting). Ms. Anderson asked if at some point they would like to get a permanent fixture sign. Mrs. Malloy and Mr. Calhoun stated it's not important at this time.

Mr. Warner stated after the workshops they could conclude approximate locations for specific items. Mr. Karam asked if EDC could fund something like the dog park. Ms. Anderson stated they would need to ask for a specific line item, but believes it would fall under Park & Rec. Mr. Karam asked where the Swan Hill entrance is located. Mr. Warner pointed it out on the map and noted that the Haddam Land Trust is letting the entrance grow in and will have the entrance off of Dublin Hill near the former dog pound.

Mrs. Malloy and Mr. Calhoun thanked the Commission and left the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

b. Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP) Grant Application

Mr. Warner distributed/reviewed with the Commission a series of photos of the Haddam Center sidewalk noting that they are in terrible condition. The sidewalk from Thirty Mile Island Plantation Burial Yard to Station Hill Road has been replaced and the proposal calls for the continuation of sidewalk replacement from that point to the UConn Extension Center. Mr. Warner stated the sidewalk was originally constructed in order for the orphanage children to walk to church. If the grant is received, the Town has to agree to maintain sidewalk (currently not required to). The grant is for rural communities and in Middlesex County there are only three rural communities – Lyme, Killingworth, and Haddam. No match required for the grant, but the Town must design the sidewalk. Noted that the State prefers shovel ready projects.

Mrs. Staskelunas stated she has an issue with the current sidewalk across from the Senior Center as the cross walk does not match with the curb cut. A brief discussion followed – cross walk needs to be repainted and pedestrian signal is not yet installed.

Ms. Melnick asked if this grant was just for Haddam; and if it would be possible to spare some for the HES sidewalk. Mr. Warner stated no, but State representatives are asking if the town has any projects; however, the town needs to start spending some of their own funds. Ms. Anderson stated the school budget could kill tax payers' willingness to fund the project. A brief discussion followed in regard to who would be responsible for clearing the sidewalk.

The Commission thanked Mr. Warner for his presentations.

MOTION: Kate Anderson motioned for EDC to support the TRIP Grant application as presented by Bill Warner, Town Planner. Doreen Staskelunas second. Motion carried unanimously.

c. 2023 Farmers' Market – Kristy Benson Amarante, Market Master

Ms. Benson Amarante stated that the Farmers' Market in 2020 was great, in 2021 it was pretty good, but in 2022 it was dismal. Ms. Benson Amarante reported she would like to move the Market to Saturday mornings with opening day being 3 June 2023, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Key vendors/farmers are on board with the day/time change and believe with this change there will be additional foot traffic.

Ms. Benson Amarante reported food trucks are unreliable and that this year she would like to cook/offer breakfast sandwiches/coffee by partnering with local farmers/roasters. Ms. Benson Amarante stated the Market has never been a stay and hangout type of Market, which has been okay, but that this might be a nice option for Market patrons. Therefore, rather than using the \$1,000 EDC has provided in the past for musical entertainment, Ms. Benson Amarante is requesting the Town purchase a tent, tables, flat top griddle, cooler, coffee pot, etc., and that it all be stored at HES. Also due to the change in day/time, new signage will need to be purchased – one large sign, yard signs, postcards, fliers, Facebook page promotional, etc. Total budget request - \$2,000.

Ms. Anderson stated the Commission would not be able to vote on the request as there was no longer a quorum, but would do so during the March meeting.

Mr. Pember asked if there would be any vendors who would be interested in providing food now that it's going to be a morning Market (prep the food at another location and then bring it to the Market to serve). Ms. Benson Amarante stated she did speak to the Health Dept. as to what would be required to sell sandwiches (\$100 permit fee also included in the budget). Do not need to do anything special as it's considered a temporary event, but she would need a thermometer and two sets of utensils.

Ms. Benson Amarante also spoke in regard to the need for volunteers and perhaps with it being on Saturday morning more people will step forward. Ms. Anderson asked who the competition is – Wallingford, Glastonbury, Tiffany's (Lyme). Mr. Karam asked how many food farm vendors would be available – Bogue Farm (anchor farm, hold down the whole season, provide produce); Walden Farm, East Haddam (whole season), Wellstone Farm, Melissa Gibson (cut flowers; will bring overflow of produce); full time bakery; Adelbrook Barkery (dog biscuits; half season). Invitations have been mailed out with six responses with one no, dead line to respond 02.21.2023 and will open to the public and/or make individual calls.

Mr. Pember asked if the point of the breakfast sandwiches was to draw attendance. Ms. Benson Amarante stated yes, and if people have a hot sandwich and coffee in their hands they will hang around a bit longer. Ms. Benson Amarante noted there is no place to sit. Mr. Pember stated he agrees with the food concept, but looking for a balance for Ms. Benson Amarante as well as EDC's budget. Mr. Karam asked where the money from sandwiches sales will go. Ms. Benson Amarante stated back to purchasing eggs, cheese, coffee, etc., for the following week. Mr. Law stated if the popularity grows, it will pay for itself.

Ms. Anderson asked Ms. Benson Amarante if she had spoken to Mike LeFleur, Haddam Lions Club noting that the Lions Club sponsored Grim's Haunted House/Fall Festival and mentioned that he has a family member who is starting up some sort of food/beverage truck. Ms. Benson Amarante will reach out to him.

Mr. Karam stated once a list of approved vendors becomes available, the Market may become more attractive to food vendors. Ms. Melnick and Ms. Anderson stated food vendor reliability is difficult.

Mr. Law stated there are one or two unbuilt picnic tables in a storage shed at Great Hill that may be available and this might enhance the sandwiches/coffee sales. Mr. Warner stated there is a picnic table at HES that would need to be relocated to the front of the property.

Discussion followed in regard to fund raising and the taking of donations; the use of the volunteer web-site; having civic/church/sports groups volunteer to cook sandwiches each week (will need to check with the Health Dept.); that the tent, griddle, tables, etc., could be used for another EDC sponsored event; other farmers' market being sponsored by a number of groups/businesses; and theme days – possibly a Shad Day, scavenger hunt, Kids' Day, and Kids' Vendor Day are popular.

Mr. Karam asked the vision for the Market – food and/or crafts. Ms. Benson Amarante stated both and crafts all have to be homemade/handmade; however, do not allow direct sales, multi-level marketing, and/or secondary vendors. The goal is to get more food and less crafts.

d. POCD Action Items

Tabled.

e. Updates - Rossi Property, HES, Higganum Cove, Scovil Hoe, and Haddam Center and Bridge Road Sidewalks

Tabled.

f. Budget and 2022/2023 Goals and Strategic Plan

Ms. Anderson reported the 2023-2024 budget season has kicked off and the BOS it is almost done with their recommendations. Ms. Anderson stated she recommended a flat budget for EDC which the BOS did approve. Still have money left from Fiscal Year 2022-2023 even after sponsoring the farmers market. Ms. Anderson discussed the possibility of purchasing a new River Days banner (original banner cannot be found).

Mr. Karam asked about funding for wayfinding; and if this could be placed on the March agenda.

g. EDC Membership Openings – Welcome New Members – Mike Karam & Kristy Benson Amarante

Ms. Anderson reported Mr. Karam and Ms. Benson Amarante will be appointed to the Commission at the BOS meeting on Monday, 13 February 2023. Ms. Anderson also reported that there are two (2) other openings that are not official open at this time. Ms. Melnick indicated she would like to be considered for one of the openings.

Holiday Markets - Ms. Melnick asked to be added to the March agenda regarding a May Market (indoor/outdoor) as well as for a request for sponsorship from the Holiday Market Committee. Ms. Melnick noted depending on how well the May Market is received there may be a July Market.

Mr. Pember asked about vendor feedback from the Holiday Market. Ms. Melnick stated it was positive; noting that a little under \$5,000 across the board was donated to the food/fuel banks, the Community Closet, HK Holiday Telethon, and the Backpack Program and that the vendors themselves made over \$28,000. Ms. Melnick stated she has applied to be a 501(c)3 – Higganum Holiday Markets - and will try for three markets every year.

Higgies - A brief discussion followed in regard to whether Higgies would be open this season. Unknown at this time.

6. Old Business

a. Tylerville Construction Planning Updates – Continued Discussion

Tabled.

b. Articles for HK News

Tabled.

c. Website Updates

Tabled.

7. Chairman's Report

Tabled.

8. Approval of Minutes – 14 September, 12 October, and 14 December 2022 and 11 January 2023

Tabled.

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

9. Adjournment

MOTION: Doreen Staskelunas motioned to adjourn. David Law second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

**The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 8 March 2023,
at the Community Center, 7 Candlewood Hill Road, Higganum, CT.**