

**TOWN OF HADDAM**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**ONLINE VIA GOTOMEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, 8 APRIL 2020**  
**APPROVED MINUTES**  
*Approved as Amended at the 8 July 2020 Meeting*

**ATTENDANCE**

X	Prem Aithal, Vice Chairman
X	Kate Anderson, Chairman
X	Courtney Emschwiller Swokla
X	Mike Farina
X	David Law
X	Mark Lundgren
X	Cindy MacNeil Sola
X	Robin Munster
A	John Pember
X	Doreen Staskelunas, Secretary
X	Bob McGarry, First Selectman
X	Sean Moriarty, Selectman
A	Bill Warner, AICP, Town Planner
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

**1. Call to Order**

Ms. Anderson, chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. and thanked everyone for being available and working through these difficult times together.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

The pledge was recited.

**3. Executive Order 7B and GoToMeeting Overview**

Ms. Anderson explained Executive Order 7B and how GoToMeeting works.

**4. Approval of Agenda**

Add: Under New Business – Item b. COVID Response.

**MOTION:** Robin Munster motioned to approve the 8 April 2020 agenda as amended. Doreen Staskelunas second. Motion carried unanimously.

**5. Public Comment**

There were no comments from those in attendance.

**6. Town Planner's Report**

Ms. Anderson reported Mr. Warner was unable to attend tonight's meeting; however, he provided the following update.

**Brownfield Grant – Scovil Hoe Building** – The town has received funding and it will be used to obtain a legal opinion regarding the possible acquisition of the property from DOT. Have advertised for RFQ's,

with a due date of 1 April 2020, and four responses were received. Interviews will need to be conducted and the panel will consist of Bob McGarry, First Selectman, Bill Warner, Town Planner, and Kate Anderson, EDC Chairman. As this structure was initially under the guidance of the Building Committee and that committee is no longer in existence, it will now fall under EDC.

## **7. Old Business**

### **a. Higganum Farmers' Market – Follow Up**

Mr. Aithal reported that he had spoken to Jaime Smith, Department of Agriculture, in regard to being a certified farmers' market. Mr. Aithal spoke about the benefits of doing so – listed on the agency's web site CT Grown; eligible for produce, cut herb, and honey producers through the farmers' market nutrition program; listed in the farmers' market nutrition checkbook list for WIC and seniors (alternate form of payment); and eligible to apply for grants through the agency; and a farmers' kiosk designation for eligible farmers. Mr. Aithal asked the Commission to ponder these aspects. Mr. Aithal stated certified farmers' markets would have more scrutiny to make sure all is in compliance.

Mr. Aithal reported farmers' markets have been deemed essential in Connecticut due to the COVID impact. There are a lot of guidelines and work involved such as staying six feet apart, pre-wrapped produce, no contact on payments (disposable Q-tips or pens), ban on entertainment (no bands), and limiting the number of people at one time – this will require an additional layer of planning. Mr. Aithal stated he's not ready to cancel the market, but at the least the Commission should consider moving the start date back a month; and if it needs to be rescheduled again or cancelled, there's some time in between to see how things play out.

Mr. McGarry stated he's reviewed the restrictions; and asked about the entertainment restrictions. Mr. Aithal stated no cooking demos or samplings, no special programming, musicians, or incentives, and vendors will need to be reminded to stay home if sick. Mr. Aithal stated one of the main reasons for pushing the market back is due to these restrictions.

Mrs. Munster asked if there was a time line on the COVID restrictions or is it open-ended. Mr. Aithal stated it's open-ended. Mr. Aithal also stated he does not want to cancel at this time, but a lot of additional planning will be required. Mr. Aithal stated although a delayed opening will cut into the market, he believes it's the right thing to do.

Mr. Aithal spoke in regard to moving the market forward until 17 July 2020 and asked the Commission's opinion. Ms. Anderson noted Cromwell cancelled their farmers' market for the season. Mr. Farina stated Durham was holding their market with a decent turnout; however, in his opinion people were still too close and it didn't seem safe. Discussion followed in regard to the lack of hand sanitizer and disinfectant.

Mrs. Staskelunas asked if a market master had been acquired. Mr. Aithal stated yes, Bittersweet Farm had stepped forward. Mr. Aithal spoke in regard to funding such as table fees, etc., and that everything going in will be going out. Mr. Aithal stated at this point in time he's not comfortable taking funding from the vendors.

Mrs. Munster asked Mr. Aithal if he had spoken to any of the vendors regarding the COVID restrictions. Mr. Aithal stated no, not yet, but would like to do that over the next two to three weeks.

Mrs. Sola agreed with moving the market back and if necessary even open in August, September, or October. Mr. Aithal agreed and will keep monitoring the situation.

**MOTION:** Prem Aithal motioned to postpone the start of the Higganum Farmers' Market to 17 July 2020. Mark Lundgren second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Aithal stated the other two aspects remaining: 1) Should the market become a certified market. Mr. Aithal stated in light of the COVID restrictions, he would wait another year; but believes it should be con-

sidered (grant money, fund a market master). Ms. Anderson stated it should be something that needs to be looked into; and talked about some attendees having booklets. Mr. Farina asked how much would be involved in being a certified market and the need for seniors and others who may need those food coupons. Mr. McGarry stated he doesn't believe the market needs to be certified in order for senior certificates to be issued (issued through Social Services). Mr. Lundgren agreed with Mr. McGarry and stated that when he was the municipal agent, the Dept. of Agriculture would issue coupons for the farmers' market. Discussion followed about looking into this matter a bit further and would the certificates be beneficial especially for those with food insecurities; the town's food bank potentially having cold space to accept fresh produce (Mr. McGarry stated Social Services has the capability). Mr. Aithal stated the process appears to be the need for a signature and then complying with the restrictions. Mr. Aithal also stated he would like to speak to the farmers first; and asked that this piece be tabled until May. Mrs. Staskelunas asked that the material be sent out to all Commissioners. Mr. Aithal will send it out. 2) The need for additional volunteers with the COVID restrictions. There was no discussion.

#### **b. Mucket Madness Day/River Days/Mucket Statue**

**Mucket Madness Day** - Mr. Lundgren thanked Chuck and Brenda Cook for their assistance in putting up the Facebook page (255 members and a web link); Helen Hanson and triathlon team (taken on an additional project by using HES "Get Moving" event for youngsters); Kristin Melnick and the tractor parade team (safety rules, clean up, etc.), Karen Atkins Russo who will be heading the food truck team; Kate Anderson (advertising and publicity and town liaison; and Bill Warner, Town Planner (cleaning up Higganum Cove before the event). Mr. Lundgren stated he and Mr. Warner having been talking to the Gateway Commission and are in the process of preparing a presentation to gain their assistance in funding the cleanup.

Mr. Lundgren spoke in regard to a suggestion by Amy Berchulski making the passage way at the back of Higganum Green be called "Mucket Crossing". Perhaps the town can place a couple of street signs at either end.

Mr. Lundgren reported the triathlon has been changed to a biathlon due to too many roadblocks (scheduling with other triathlons; safety concerns getting in/out of the reservoir, etc.) The routes for the biathlon and tractor parade are complete and have been forwarded to Mr. McGarry.

Mr. Lundgren stated he has sent the \$500 non-refundable deposit (from his own funds) to DizzyFish. Mr. Lundgren has asked key people to send flier and tee-shirt requests to the advertising and publicity team. Lastly Mr. Lundgren proposed that the EDC take on the full financial responsibility for this event as volunteers have reported discomfort in asking for donations/sponsorships during this difficult time (noted that donations have dried up). Mr. Lundgren stated he had come up with a rough budget of \$3,350 (\$700 port-o-lets; \$200 safety equipment, signage and vests, and two small Muckets for the winners of the biathlon and tractor parade).

Discussion followed in regard to EDC taking on the financial responsibility of this event. Ms. Anderson voiced concern as this event was not accounted for in either fiscal year budgets and given the circumstances/uncertainties there should be more thought put into the events budget. Ms. Anderson stated although people want to see the event happen, is it wise to be spending town money that was not budgeted for this event (if go over budget, it would not be a good reflection). Mrs. Sola stated EDC cannot raise funds and it should be a budget item unless there's an organization separate from EDC that can solicit donations (difficult at this time).

Mr. Lundgren stated he had hoped that this event would have been self-supporting, but then COVID came along. Mr. Lundgren stated he has helped two Higganum Center businesses with funding, but one will probably go out of business before funding comes through. Mr. Lundgren stated he feels bad asking for additional funding noting that he has risen close to \$2,000 and everyone who donated is over 65. Mr. McGarry asked Mr. Lundgren to look at his budget; and voiced concern over the town being in dire financial straits – tax flow from July payments, tax deferrals, and low interest rates due to current conditions. The BOF passed an initial budget roughly \$500,000 more than last year's budget and it doesn't include

the impact from the school (their budget went up). Mr. McGarry stated although he was looking forward to Mucket Madness and believes it would be good for the town, he can't commit to \$3,350. Mr. Lundgren stated it makes it definitive as to what needs to be done and will begin unwinding all of the planning and announce that it will be cancelled for at least this year. Mr. Aithal stated safety and health need to be considered not only for Mucket Madness, but also for the farmers' market.

Mr. Lundgren asked for a vote on cancelling Mucket Madness Day for 2020. Mr. McGarry asked the motion be amended to specifically say that the concept be revisited for 2021 as he believes it's really worthwhile.

Ms. Anderson stated before making the motion the Commission should talk about River Days as it was contemplated to tie the two events together.

**River Days** – Ms. Anderson reported that River Days is a separate line item within the budget and, therefore, the funds are accounted for, but it is a significant amount of money - \$10,000. Ms. Anderson spoke in regards to Mr. Aithal's concerns about public health and safety and the Commission should discuss whether or not to hold River Days separately or cancel both events all together and 2021 is the year.

Mrs. Sola stated she had heard the second wave of COVID-19 would come during the fall and perhaps the Commission should consider postponing everything and making 2021 the big year. Ms. Anderson stated as dedicated as the volunteers are, a lot of the moving pieces are out of EDC's control such as DEEP, the fireworks, etc. Mr. Aithal asked if there was any way to trim down Mucket Madness and River Days to make it COVID proof. Discussion followed with the main theme being public health and safety.

Mrs. Munster stated the State is mandating less than 10 from gather, no one knows what is going to happen, and COVID will be in the back of everyone's thoughts. Mrs. Munster also stated for better planning and better thought process, especially in combining the two events, it would be best to wait until 2021.

Ms. Anderson asked Mr. Lundgren's thoughts of holding the event in the spring or early summer of next year – perhaps use it to kick off the farmers' market. Mr. Lundgren stated he did research the date and it was not only for being the driest month of the year, but it was also to be a back to school bash. Mr. Lundgren stated no to spring as the rain is just too chancy. Mrs. Sola asked Mr. Lundgren if he would like to keep the event for August 2021. Mr. Lundgren stated he's game to do so and hopefully the strength of the volunteers will still be there. In response to Mr. Aithal's comment, Mr. Lundgren stated the premise of the event was to go big based on the Higganum Center study. Mrs. Sola agreed that it should be done big and believes the events should be postponed and additional effort and planning be put into the events in 2021.

Mrs. Staskelunas asked Mr. Lundgren if DizzyFish could be booked for 2021 and the \$500 deposit used there. Mr. Lundgren stated another \$500 deposit would be required noting that DizzyFish is highly sought after (sold out in Wallingford) and Haddam was able to book them at a discount. Mrs. Sola perhaps because of COVID-19, DizzyFish would honor the deposit for next year. Mr. Lundgren will speak to Eric Herbst in July when he has an opportunity to speak to him face to face. Discussion followed at length with the theme being health and safety first.

**MOTION:** Kate Anderson motioned that EDC postpone Mucket Madness Day and River Days until August 2021. Doreen Staskelunas second. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Anderson apologized to Mr. Lundgren and thanked him for all his hard work in organizing Mucket Madness Day. Mr. Aithal committed to Mucket Madness 2021 and stated he would do a special karaoke fund raiser for it. Mrs. Staskelunas commended Mr. Lundgren on his enthusiasm for Mucket Madness and thanked him for his vision, time, and personal funds he put into this event to date. Mrs. Staskelunas stated she understands Mr. Lundgren's disappointment and also committed to Mucket Madness 2021. Mr. Lundgren thanked the Commission for their understanding and kindness.

**Mucket Statue:** Mr. Lundgren reported that Greg McKenna, owner, Nutmeg Pharmacy, had asked about the statues as he is looking for an artist to paint the statue. Ms. Anderson reported the statues are ready to go. Discussion followed in regard to location and the best method to unveil the Mucket in light of the pandemic. Mr. Farina suggested organizing a drive by unveiling and that this would be something fun for the kids and make people smile. Ms. Anderson stated she was leaning toward a statue being placed on the Higganum Green. Mr. Lundgren stated next to Mucket Crossing! Discussion followed in regard to a scavenger hunt, promoting the unveiling, and perhaps some sort of contest.

Mrs. Staskelunas asked if a statue will be going by the pharmacy. Ms. Anderson stated yes, as Mr. McKenna had provided a substantial sum of money to get this project rolling.

This item to be a primary agenda item in May.

### **c. Qigong**

Ms. Anderson reported that she would like to remove Qigong as a standing agenda item; and asked Mrs. Sola if she was comfortable with that. Mrs. Sola stated yes, as things seem to be working well.

## **8. New Business**

### **a. Budget**

Ms. Anderson reported the new garlands will go into the existing containers; and asked the Commission on how they felt about donating the old garland to a business. Mr. Farina asked if the older garland could be used for the new lighting that will be coming to Tylerville. Ms. Anderson stated she will contact the Shops at Tylerville. Mrs. Sola asked about cleaning out the closet in the Community Center and using it for storage. Ms. Anderson stated yes, that is the plan. Mrs. Staskelunas asked if the Shops at Tylerville want the old garland, then it would be separate from EDC. Ms. Anderson stated yes, there are extra garland strands and she will reach out to Tylerville to see if they are interested in using them which will allow for extra storage space. Mrs. Staskelunas stated she was fine with the donation if Tylerville wants them, she was just clarifying ownership at that point (if Tylerville accepts, the garland would belong to them).

### **b. COVID Response**

Ms. Anderson thanked Mr. Lundgren for helping a business with paperwork in order to remain opened. Ms. Anderson reported that Mr. Warner and Mr. McGarry have been providing as much information as they possibly can via Facebook and the town's web site, but there is a lot of information to digest. Ms. Anderson stated she received a suggestion to compile information as to what businesses are open; and if so, hours of operation, and what can be done to help. Ms. Anderson stated she thought Kathy Brown, Haddam-Killingworth Now, had published an article regarding this subject, but was unable to locate it.

Mr. Farina asked if some of the freed up funding could be used to help sponsor local businesses or emergency services. As a small business owner, Mrs. Sola stated her business has been closed since 12 March 2020 and there is no income coming in. Mrs. Sola stated her concern is taxes and she does not want to defer her taxes as you still need to pay them at a later date. Trying to figure out how to get your clients back in the door and help the business person with that.

Ms. Anderson stated there will be a Board of Selectmen's (BOS) on Monday, 13 April 2020, at which time there will be discussion pertaining to Executive Order 7S - Municipal Tax Programs. At this time, Ms. Anderson has not had an opportunity to read through the Order, but will bring up Mr. Farina's suggestion at the BOS meeting.

Ms. Anderson stated one of the charrette result Action Items was to build a merchants' association and if one is ever needed, now is the time and it will go into motion quickly. Ms. Anderson reported she and Larry Maggi have been working on it noting that the plan was to hold an in-person meeting, but now that

can't happen any time soon, but hopefully a grassroots effort will have this happening soon. Part of the struggle is how to reach the businesses as well as the community. If anyone needs help, refer them to EDC or the town hall. Mrs. Sola and Mr. Lundgren support the establishment of an association as well as it being online. Mr. McGarry stated he would like to have one or two business associations to help pass information along.

Mr. Aithal asked if there has been any consideration given to hold an online COVID town hall meeting specifically to business owners rather than wait for the establishment of an association(s). Mr. Law asked what would have the most participation – social media, Facebook, Twitter – and then take advantage of them to connect with people. Ms. Anderson stated she was working on a quick overview graphic that will be ready by the end of the week and hopefully will be out on Facebook (can be emailed or any social media page). Mr. Law suggested a page for everyone, but also one specifically to the business owners. Discussion followed at length in regard to the various businesses using the local Facebook pages and the town having an email list of all businesses in town (Mr. Warner is not aware of such a list. Will check with Mrs. Munster to see if she's aware of a list).

Mr. Aithal asked that the merchant association announcement be sent to the Haddam Bulletin as well as Haddam Now. Ms. Anderson stated yes. For clarification purposes, Ms. Anderson stated even though EDC is talking about the merchants' association, it will not be sponsored by EDC. The association is being developed by business owners.

## **9. Chairman's Report**

**BOS Meeting – Monday, 13 April 2020** – Ms. Anderson reported the meeting will be held via GoTo-Meeting. The agenda will contain the code to access the meeting.

## **10. Approval of Minutes**

**12 February 2020 and 11 March 2020 Minutes** – The Commission agreed to table the approval of the minutes until the May meeting.

## **11. Adjournment**

**MOTION:** Doreen Staskelunas motioned to adjourn. Cindy Sola second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Bunny Hall Batzner*

Bunny Hall Batzner  
Recording Clerk

**The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 13 May 2020.**