

**TOWN OF HADDAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
COMMUNITY CENTER
7 CANDLEWOOD HILL ROAD, HIGGANUM, CT 06441
WEDNESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2023
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

X	Kate Anderson, Chairman
A	Kristy Benson Amarante
X	Curtis Browne
A	Cortney Emshwiller Swokla
X	Mike Farina
X	Mike Karam
X	David Law
X	John Pember
X	Doreen Staskelunas, Secretary
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

GUEST: Stacey Kinney

1. Call to Order

Ms. Anderson, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was recited.

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Mike Farina motioned to approve the 13 September 2023 agenda as submitted. David Law second. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment

Ms. Anderson reported that Stacey Kinney expressed interest in becoming a member of EDC. Ms. Kinney stated she was happy to hear there was an opportunity to be a part of the Commission and that she has been living in the town since 1986 and her family has lived in the town since the late 1940s (grandmother owned a beauty salon in the Center for many years). Ms. Kinney stated she was much more active years ago, but other things took her away; and now she sees an opportunity to volunteer. Ms. Anderson thanked Ms. Kinney for coming to the meeting and invited her to participate in the Commission's discussions.

5. New Business

a. CT Main Street

Webinar Link – Ms. Anderson thanked Mr. Browne for sending out the webinar recording for the Main Street Management 101 session for those who could not attend.

Accelerator Program - Ms. Anderson reported last month the Commission had discussed the pending program and that she forwarded an email (press release) announcing the program and there is an informational session on Thursday, 21 September 2023, to learn about the benefits and eligibility requirements of the program. This is a virtual six (6) month program where participants learn/practice the

nationally proven four (4) point Main Street approach and apply it to a specific challenge that their community is facing. Ms. Anderson stated in light of everything that the town is facing, it would be feasible and easy to come up with a challenge the Commission would like to address.

Ms. Anderson noted that the Commission did just renew their annual CT Main Street membership. CT Main Street recently reached out and was told the town would be renewing their membership and would be contacting them in order to take advantage of their services/resources.

Ms. Anderson stated she believes applications for the Accelerator Program are due in November. Mrs. Batzner reviewed the August minutes which indicated applications are due 3 November 2023. Ms. Anderson stated the application is not available at this time and it's unclear how intensive it will be. Mr. Farina explained a process that he went through previously in Coventry. Ms. Anderson recommended a subcommittee be formed who could meet between the informational session and the October meeting to provide an update to the Commission on the matter. Ms. Anderson stated the curriculum can be downloaded. Ms. Anderson stated EDC would be doing the leg work and CT Main Street would be the advisor.

Mr. Karam stated he felt Higganum Center has a unique situation by having two (2) state roads running through it and questioned which is considered the main street. Mr. Karam also stated he felt because of the two (2) state roads it makes it difficult to create a walkable community, slowing down traffic, bike lane, etc., and DOT dictates a lot of that. Ms. Anderson stated the assumption should not be that the focus will be the Center, it could be Tylerville. Ms. Anderson stated the first question should be what is considered the main street within the confines of the entirety of Haddam. The Commission agreed.

Ms. Kinney stated she believes the bigger issue will be when the new apartments are full and the store fronts are empty. Ms. Anderson agreed.

Mr. Browne asked Ms. Anderson what the focus would be – driving towards what the Accelerator Program is, what programs would be available, what the key dates are, and what the objectives and deliverables are. Ms. Anderson stated yes, all of those items as well as a debriefing of the program. Ms. Anderson will work with Mr. Browne on this matter.

Mr. Browne asked Mr. Farina if he heard correctly that CT Main Street wanted an actual presentation. Mr. Farina noted that when he participated in the Coventry process it was some years ago and believes they went to CT Main Street's headquarters. Mr. Browne asked if he and Ms. Anderson could ask him questions along the way. Mr. Farina stated yes. Discussion followed in regard to the various areas of town and potential acceptance of this program or non-acceptance.

Accelerator Program Subcommittee: Curtis Browne and Kate Anderson.

b. Seasonal Events

River Days – Ms. Anderson reported that this event has been bumped out to Saturday, 30 September 2023 (rain date Sunday, 1 October 2023). DEEP does not have a special permit coordinator on staffed at the moment.

Ms. Anderson stated one of the biggest obstacles of River Days is that it is held at a state park, requires state approval, and very expensive state officers to oversee the event. Ms. Anderson also stated over the last couple of years, she has been looking for town owned property to hold the event on and where it could be bigger like it used to be. Ms. Anderson asked what people would think of moving it to the Haddam Neck Fairgrounds. The fireworks technician took a preliminary aerial view and thinks it would work. Bob McGarry, First Selectman and Haddam Neck Fair Board of Director, stated for the fair's 100th anniversary they had fireworks so the site is conducive to the event. Mrs. Staskelunas asked if it could be tied into the fair. Ms. Anderson stated possibly.

Mr. Karam stated he was told there was a portion of River Days held on the green. Mrs. Staskelunas stated there used to be a craft fair held on the green. Ms. Anderson stated when the event first began it

was held at the Haddam Meadows over the course of a couple of days and it was more like a festival – dance performances, bands, other activities – and over the years DEEP took more of a preservation approach and have made it clear that the event will never go back to what it originally was.

Mr. Karam asked about the use of the Cove. Mrs. Staskelunas stated there's no parking; and asked where the fireworks would be staged. Ms. Anderson also spoke in regard to the fireworks debris and all the wildlife on site.

Mr. Law asked about fields at Jail Hill. Ms. Anderson stated too close to houses.

Ms. Anderson stated she would need to approach the fair and believes there will be a rental, but believes it would be less than what is currently be expended. Ms. Anderson stated she has discussed the matter with Mr. McGarry and in his opinion people could still see the fireworks (high ones) from the Meadows and from a boat on the river. Discussion followed regarding the bridge closures, marketing, whether the fireworks could be viewed from the Cove, etc.

Ms. Kinney asked if River Days is just about the fireworks, because if it is, just make it a fireworks event and create something more for River Days (more about the community). Ms. Anderson stated historically the fireworks have always been the weekend after Labor Day and asked Mr. McGarry if that would allow the fair sufficient time to breakdown and in his opinion, yes. The hope would be to get all the community groups to participate again. Mrs. Staskelunas stated in recent years River Days have become about the fireworks.

Mr. Karam stated if the issue is the cost for security, a move makes sense; but if it's the question of how do we make River Days more than fireworks and more community oriented that's a separate issue. Mr. Karam suggested the screening of a movie prior to the fireworks. Mr. Karam stated he would be more excited about how to make River Days more than just fireworks than how do you move the fireworks to a location that already has a lot of excitement around the same time and it loses its sparkle. Mr. Law spoke in regard to river oriented events – canoe race, boat parade (all lit up at night), educational/historical sessions, etc. Discussion followed.

Mrs. Staskelunas stated all of the town's events are from Labor Day until the end of year – fair, fireworks, Grim's Haunted House, Fall Festival, Holiday Pop Up Market – and perhaps there needs to be a way to figure out how to spread out the activities. Ms. Anderson will contact the fair association.

Grim's Haunted House/Fall Festival/Trunk or Treat - Haddam Elementary School, 272 Saybrook Road, last weekend in October. Grim's - Friday-Sunday, 27-29 October 2023. Fall Festival/Trunk or Treat – Saturday, 28 October 2023. The band Rocklanding will be performing again this year. The Women's Club will be running the Kids Fair. Youth and Family Services will be there (believe they have booked a virtual reality truck for the kids). Have not heard of anyone being interested in taking over the Tractor Parade.

Mr. Karam asked if the activities will be outside the gym. Ms. Anderson stated yes, the side parking lot, the basketball court, and the field that wraps around the back. The idea is to leave the main parking lot open for parking. Ms. Kinney asked if there would be a hay ride. Ms. Anderson stated they would like to, but have not planned for it yet and hopefully it will be the next big addition.

Ms. Anderson stated volunteers (15 years of age and older) are always needed, especially adult volunteers to assist with the haunted house (some of the props were badly damaged last year). High school kids can get community service hours (will sign off on). Mrs. Staskelunas asked if the Lions Club will be involved. Ms. Anderson stated yes, noting that almost \$7,000 in donations was collected that went back to the Haddam Food and Fuel Banks. This year the Lions are working on a Venmo and/or QR Code system because a lot of people didn't have cash.

Mrs. Staskelunas asked about food. Ms. Anderson stated there are a couple of food trucks booked, the PTO will be doing hot and cold beverages, and a lot of candy as a lot of kids are expected.

Ms. Anderson stated they expect to still be shutting down a portion of Candlewood Hill Road by the green as they expect people to be parking over at the green and the Community Center area. A state trooper will be stationed at Route 154. A couple of tower lights will also be rented to make sure there's plenty of lighting.

Holiday Decorations – Ms. Anderson stated she has not taken an inventory from last year and what's needed for this year. Mr. Law stated the Commission approved the purchase of a tree for the gazebo and a better tree stand that will hold the tree up. Ms. Kinney suggested a large bucket or half oak barrel filled with wet sand to hold the tree. Ms. Anderson stated she will ask Bogue Farm about donating a tree.

Mr. Karam asked who lights the large tree on the green. Ms. Anderson stated the Carlson family and it is a family tradition to light the tree on Thanksgiving. Mr. Karam stated there's a good sized invasive vine growing up the tree and he has some people lined up to help remove it (he's hoping to have it removed by Thanksgiving).

Mrs. Staskelunas and Mr. Law noted that the gazebo is in need of attention (paint). Mrs. Batzner stated the Lions Club cleaned and painted it several years ago. Mr. Law stated new lights will be needed. Mrs. Staskelunas stated the garland is beginning to break a part. Mr. Karam asked if it was only the pillars that needed paint. Mr. Farina, Mrs. Staskelunas, and Mr. Law stated the whole structure. Mrs. Batzner will ask questions of a Lions member.

Tylerville Tree Lighting - Mr. Pember asked if anything will be taking place in Tylerville. Ms. Anderson stated yes, and believes it is the first Friday in December and will probably change up the ad noting the tree lighting. Ms. Anderson stated the merchants normally put in their own funding, but in July EDC voted to donate \$500 to the event.

c. Updates

Ms. Anderson reported on the following:

Rossi Property – There was nothing new to report at this time. Ms. Kinney asked what has transpired with the hazardous waste sites on the property. Mr. Law stated there is a small area that development cannot take place on. Ms. Anderson stated it's about one-tenth (1/10) of an acre and that there are hot spots on the property. Ms. Kinney asked if that's what the delay is or if it had nothing to do with it.

Ms. Anderson stated one (1) developer submitted to the town's Request for Proposals (RFP) and is interested in the entire parcel. Ms. Anderson stated there is environmental cleanup that will need to take place at some point, but when the town purchased the property, money was placed in escrow and there's state funding. Ms. Kinney stated this is near the school and the proposed work and voice concern that it could stop the work. Ms. Anderson stated quite a bit of hazardous waste was already trucked out, one spot is under a building, and due to the area having been study so extensively, the town's environmental consult was confident that they wouldn't find any surprises when they went in to take out what's left. Ms. Anderson stated it's called an environmental land use restriction. Ms. Kinney stated her concern lies in that she lives near Michaels Junk Yard and the groundwater was contaminated and it is an issue that does not go away.

Mr. Law asked if only one (1) developer responded, what's the development plan. Ms. Anderson stated they're interested in mixed use – eight (8) affordable housing units and commercial. Mr. Law stated for this town the site would need to be developed commercially. Mr. Law asked about the pharmacy. Ms. Anderson stated the developer is operating separately from the pharmacy; and if the pharmacy would like to work with the developer, it can. Mr. Karam asked if the developer has purchased the property. Ms. Anderson stated no, the town owns the property.

HES – A few architects have been interviewed for the Space Utilization Study and one (1) was selected. Will look at HES and provide a couple of scenarios of what could be moved into the structure and associated costs. Will survey all the town buildings and anyone interested in moving into HES will be considered. Community public outreach meetings will be conducted and then a final presentation. Expect community meetings to be conducted in November/December. Noted that consultant was cognizant of when budget season starts for a municipality (won't have final report ready, but will be far enough along to provide an idea for numbers). Mr. Karam asked if the playground was a part of this proposal or separate. Ms. Anderson stated separate (a landscape architect), but they will communicate with each other about what they're doing.

Mr. Browne asked if there are proposals or statements on the town's website. Ms. Anderson stated she can get the information to him. A brief discussion followed in regard to the number of little projects proposed – dog park, walking path, etc.

Shad Museum - Ms. Kinney asked if the Shad Museum is a temporary structure at HES. Ms. Anderson stated the Shad Museum will be permanently placed toward the front back corner (near Route 154 and toward Methodist Church), but it needs floor repairs before its final move. Ms. Kinney asked if anyone had considered a couple of raised garden beds. Ms. Anderson stated yes.

Community Septic – Mr. Karam asked if this could be added under updates. Ms. Anderson stated yes, and reported that the town's engineer is working on a plan to submit for approval. The soil testing has been conducted, but they have not determined the final septic layout. Mr. Karam asked if HES is still part of the proposal. Ms. Anderson stated HES has always been a part of the proposal as well as the green.

Mr. Law stated whatever they develop at Scovil the green will be the only site they can use for the septic. Mr. Farina stated he too heard that. Ms. Anderson stated it will be up to Scovil (the developer) to advise the town as to what their ideas for the site are; or at some point, the town's engineer will inform Scovil that this is the design and whatever is developed will need to fit that design. Mr. Karam stated if a restaurant were to go in, more leaching fields would be required than if office space/retail were to go in. Discussion followed.

Mr. Karam stated after last month's meeting where there was a comment regarding there being only one (1) tenant at Scovil, he emailed his contact at Parker Benjamin who has indicated that it is true and that one (1) tenant would still be leasing shops, galleries, and offices. Mr. Karam spoke in regard to the vision that the developer had sold the town on and what P&Z approved and that's how it has to be used unless they come in with a special permit application. Mr. Karam stated he is skeptical because when he hears one (1) tenant, he thinks office building and does not think thriving shops. Mr. Karam recommended the Commission be attentive. Mr. Browne stated they're investors who will not be managing business and will be selling it. Mr. Browne stated Mr. Karam had a right to be concerned and the Commission needs to be watchful.

Higganum Cove – Cove Committee is meeting regularly and continuing to make great progress. Some trees were recently taken down and new wayfinding signs have been installed.

Scovil Hoe – There is no update on the tenant and the town is preparing the environmental specifications to go out to bid for the environmental remediation that has to take place. Believe this will start in the late winter or early spring depending on the weather.

Haddam Center and Bridge Road Sidewalks – Haddam - The first phase of Haddam Center sidewalks appears to be complete and work on the second phase from Station Hill down to the UConn Extension Center probably will not begin until sometime next year. A brief discussion followed regarding the cross-walk between the Senior Center and the library (dangerous area due to high speeds). **Tylerville** – Believe the work is complete.

Jail – Ms. Kinney asked about an update on the Jail; and mentioned that it would be a great place for a haunted house.

Community Garden – Ms. Kinney suggested creating some community gardens not only for people on fixed incomes, but for the people in the apartments. Noted there is a small garden at the Annex building.

Phantom Brewery (next to Dunkin Donuts, 201 Saybrook Road, Higganum) – Still moving forward. Mrs. Staskelunas stated she believes the owner closed the brewery in Hartford so he could focus on the Higganum business.

Larry's Garage, 125 Saybrook Road, Higganum – An existing business (mechanic) has recently purchased the property. Mr. Law stated it will be nice to have a viable business back on the site.

Higganum Smoke Shop, 26 Killingworth Road, Higganum – Mr. Karam asked if there has been an update on the arrest of the owner of the smoke shop. Ms. Anderson stated there's no update that she's aware of. Ms. Anderson stated she does sit on the Youth and Family Services Coalition and that this has been a topic for the last couple of months (brainstorming ideas of how the Coalition can work with the town to develop enforceable actions when business owners are not in compliance with laws). Ms. Anderson explained the situation regarding the arrest and some of the feedback received from the troopers (need a witness to provide their name as well as a statement). A brief discussion followed.

6. Old Business

a. Tylerville Businesses/Swing Bridge Construction – Update

Business Interruption Grant – Ms. Anderson reported that the town meeting to authorize the grant program passed unanimously. Diane Murphy, Administrative Coordinator, Land Use Office, hand delivered the application and guidelines to most of the businesses and anyone who she couldn't visit received their packet via certified mail. As of yesterday, Tuesday, 12 September 2023, one (1) application had been received. The subcommittee will be reviewing applications as they arrive and discussion will take place under executive session. Ms. Anderson stated the business owners were happy the grant passed. Ms. Anderson also stated there is still not much support from anywhere else.

Yard Signs – Ms. Anderson asked Mr. Browne if he had been paid for the signs. Mr. Browne stated no, because he worked with Linda Pinette, Accounting Clerk, and she paid for the signs using the town's credit card.

Newspaper Ad – Ad is still running in the Haddam Killingworth News.

Nutmegz, 1610 Saybrook Road, Haddam (Tylerville) – New restaurant located in the building where the Cooking Company previously was.

Commonwealth Senior Living at Haddam formerly the Saybrook at Haddam – Mr. Farina reported their representatives came before P&Z seeking a zone change from R2A (residential) to Tylerville Village District (approved) and discussed/provided preliminary renderings of 28 future town houses for 55 and up (independent living). They would need to come back to P&Z with a special permit for the town houses.

Cell Phone Tower, 124 Ague Springs, Haddam Neck – Mr. Karam asked about the tower. This will not reach Tylerville, but will reach Haddam Meadows area and will eliminate the proposed Jail Hill tower. Ms. Anderson stated they are still pushing for the tower down in Tylerville (located on private property). Mr. Browne asked if Verizon would be the provider. Mrs. Batzner stated yes, in Haddam Neck.

b. Budget and 2023/2024 Goals and Strategic Plan

Ms. Anderson reported that she did not have a chance to update the handout, but will do so and email it out. Mrs. Batzner stated everyone was provided with an updated runoff. Ms. Anderson stated the HK Now ad is a monthly invoice and should be reflected next month.

Mr. Karam stated he submitted the receipts from the Beautification Committee. Mrs. Batzner stated that the planters are beautiful and suggested Mr. Karam find some place to store the planters prior to the winter season so they are not hit by the DOT snowplows or the contractor plowing the store's parking lot.

Higgies - Mr. Law stated when the owners started out for the summer they had indicated that they would be open for the season and they were open for about six (6) weeks because they had to close down for fair season. Mr. Law stated Higgies is a good place for Higganum and it needs to be cultivated.

Blue Oar – Mr. Law stated the Commission needs to figure a way to get this business reopened as it was a good business for Haddam. Mr. Farina asked if the marina was still up for sale. Unclear whether the owners pulled the lease on restaurant.

c. POCD Action Items

Tabled. Ms. Anderson will add the Action Items to the Goals and Strategies paperwork.

d. 2023 Farmers' Market – Update

Ms. Anderson reported the Farmers' Market did not reopen as planned last Saturday, 9 September 2023, but will do so this Saturday, 16 September 2023, and will run until the second Saturday in October. Ms. Anderson stated traffic really picked up noting that Saturday Market attendees are very different from the Friday Market attendees in that there are a lot more families and people are handing out. Noted that it would be great to have a playground back as there are also a number of children. Due to rain, opened up the multi-purpose room and the use of the courtyard have been a plus. Suggested that a couple of big signs to promote the Market be purchased and placed out front. This year's Market is more of what has been envisioned.

e. Wayfinding Campaign

Mr. Karam reported there was no update as he still needs to contact Chester to see who did their signs.

Beautification Committee - Mr. Karam reported that he thanked EDC in the Haddam Now and thanked everyone at the meeting. Mr. Karam asked if it would be too late to request a budget for next year (should be coming up December/January). Mr. Karam stated it cost almost \$800 for the strip in front of the Village Market – planters, soil, plants, etc. Mr. Karam will speak to Bob Frazier, Red Barn Feed and Hardware, in regard to storing the planters for the winter.

New Light Pole, Corner Routes 154 & 81 – Mr. Farina noted the new light pole was installed. Mrs. Batzner stated yes, put the electrician noticed there was an issue when installing the light and is aware that additional work is required with some of the other streetlights.

Road Runner, 12 Killingworth Road, Higganum – Mrs. Staskelunas asked if the Road Runner had been sold. Ms. Anderson stated she did not know.

Truck Bar, 66 Killingworth Road, Higganum – Mr. Karam stated he's heard the Truck Bar is suffering too. Mrs. Staskelunas stated she heard they are planning on putting in pickle ball. Ms. Anderson stated the Truck Bar hurt themselves with the purchase of the bigger location on the Berlin Turnpike.

7. Chairman's Report

Board of Education (BOE) - Ms. Anderson reported that the BOE was holding their final community conversation regarding the master plan for the renovations. Final Plan is scheduled for some time in November.

8. Approval of Minutes – 9 August 2023

MOTION: Mike Karam motioned to approve the 9 August 2023 minutes as submitted. Kate Anderson second. Motion carried with Mr. Law, Mr. Pember, and Mrs. Staskelunas abstaining.

9. Review Next Meeting Date & Location

Ms. Anderson reported the next EDC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 11 October 2023, at the Community Center.

10. Adjournment

MOTION: Doreen Staskelunas motioned to adjourn. John Pember second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bunny Hall Batzner
Bunny Hall Batzner
Recording Clerk

**The next meeting is Wednesday, 11 October 2023,
at the Community Center, 7 Candlewood Hill Road, Higganum, CT.**