

**TOWN OF HADDAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
VIA GOTOMEETING
WEDNESDAY, 9 JUNE 2021
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

X	Prem Aithal, Vice Chairman
X	Kate Anderson, Chairman
X	Cortney Emshwiller Swokla (6:48 p.m.)
X	Mike Farina
A	David Law
A	Mark Lundgren
X	Robin Munster (6:47 p.m.)
A	John Pember
X	Doreen Staskelunas, Secretary
X	Bob McGarry, First Selectman
X	Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

1. Call to Order

Ms. Anderson, chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was recited.

3. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Anderson reminded all Commissioners to state their name prior to speaking.

MOTION: Doreen Staskelunas motioned to approve the 9 June 2021 agenda as submitted. Mike Farina second. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment

There were no comments from members of the public who were in attendance.

5. New Business

a. Pop Up Market – Discussion

Ms. Anderson reported that she had spoken to Jan Verney who would like to run another Pop Up Market in the multi-purpose room at Haddam Elementary School (HES) like they did last year. This year's event would only be for a long weekend or a long weekend into the next week. Currently Ms. Verney is only looking for the EDC's support of the event – advertising, getting the word out, etc. Last year there was a single point check out system and Ms. Verney is currently trying to figure out how that might happen for this year's event. Also spoke about vendor fees and having those fees donated back to the town whether it is for the fuel and/or food banks, Back Pack program, etc.

Mrs. Staskelunas asked if the event would be held during the holidays. Ms. Anderson stated yes, and that the event could be a nice tie in to a tree lighting ceremony (would need to coordinate with the Carlsons who decorate the tree on Higganum Green), have Santa come in, and some light refreshments.

Ms. Anderson reported she and Ms. Verney had discussed having the market open in time for Small Business Saturday – open Friday-Sunday, 26-28 November, and then going into the next weekend. Ms. Anderson stated Ms. Verney has reached out to the vendors and it will depend on their feedback. Discussion followed with Ms. Anderson noting she did not want to conflict with the middle school craft fair (believed being held on Saturday, 4 December). Mr. Aithal asked if these are official dates. Ms. Anderson stated no, the dates are still flexible at this point. Mr. Aithal asked if Ms. Verney is asking EDC when it is best to hold the event or if it is all speculation. Ms. Anderson stated she's serious about holding the event and will move forward with it, but is looking for EDC's support.

Mr. Farina asked if there is a Plan B location should HES be sold or leased. Ms. Anderson stated she does not believe there is a Plan B and that it would be difficult to have it in the Community Center because it is a well-used building; and it's unclear where else the event could be held. Mr. Farina stated if all else fails, outdoor tents could be set up noting that there are a lot of open markets that take place.

Ms. Anderson stated Ms. Verney had explained that they look for longer duration events because the vendors need to be able to set up for a few days to make it worth their while to move everything in.

Mrs. Staskelunas asked if there will be an outdoor farmers' market that would be held about the same time. Ms. Anderson stated she didn't believe so; and given the success of the middle school craft fair, doesn't believe Ms. Benson would compete against them.

MOTION: Mike Farina motioned to approve EDC's support to the Pop Up Market as proposed by Jan Verney. Prem Aithal second. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Anderson will advise Ms. Verney that she has EDC's support.

b. Budget – Holiday Decorations

Ms. Anderson reported the end of the fiscal year is 30 June and there is still money remaining – approximately \$4,000. The Commission had been discussing updating the holiday decorations and had originally talked about ordering snowflakes and garlands for Tylerville; however, the sidewalk project has gone out to bid and only one bid was received. Therefore, the purchasing of decorations for Tylerville will be put on hold for the time being. **(Recording Clerk's Note:** It was noted under Chairman's Report that it is not the Tylerville sidewalks that are hold, but the Haddam Center sidewalks.)

Ms. Anderson reported that although the Commission may not be purchasing decorations for Tylerville at this time, the purchase of bows for the Higganum Center streetscape light poles can still be done. Ms. Anderson noted the bows should have been replaced at least a year ago if not two. Ms. Anderson stated the bows cost approximately \$20 each and 14 are required (noted shipping should be factored in).

Mrs. Munster asked if any of the remaining money could be used to pay for River Days such as paying for the fireworks or a rental. Ms. Anderson stated she spoke to Ann Harter, Finance Director, regarding this and she recommended not doing so as she would prefer it be paid from the fiscal year the event is taking place in. Mrs. Munster suggested buying the decorations for Tylerville and housing them as there is no guarantee the Commission will receive the funding again. Ms. Anderson stated the Commission did discuss purchasing signage for Higganum Cove as it's unclear whether funding will be available from the Gateway Commission. Mr. Farina stated the matter was tabled at the last Gateway meeting and that they recently changed their grant process. A brief discussion followed in regard to voting for funding for Cove signage.

MOTION: Mike Farina motioned to approve the expenditure of up to \$320.00 for the purchase of new bows for the Higganum Center Streetscape light poles. Prem Aithal second. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Anderson will place the order for the bows.

Mr. Aithal discussed how the Commission might be able to help the businesses in town especially after coming off a pandemic. Mr. Aithal suggested prizes for people who shop local. Ms. Anderson stated she agrees, but would need to find out what is allowable (legal). A brief discussion followed in regard to whether this can be done this year (perhaps better considered for next year) or whether it would be better to fund signage for the Cove.

Ms. Anderson reported the town will be receiving some federal COVID relief money and that Mr. McGarry and Mr. Warner are exploring some type of business loan relief fund (no particulars at this time).

Mr. Farina asked Ms. Anderson how much money was requested for EDC for fiscal year 2021-2022. Ms. Anderson stated \$7,000 and it was approved.

Mr. McGarry reported as things currently stand, the town will receive \$2.4 million in the American Rescue Plan funding - \$1.2 million this year and \$1.2 million the following year (some of this funding may be in jeopardy). Mr. McGarry also reported there has been some discussion at the River Council of Governments in regard to pooling money to create a business grant or loan fund to be administered by the Chamber.

In regard to the funding for a sign at the Cove, Mr. McGarry voiced concern as to how money will be obligated this year as the expense/invoice will not be coming until after the start of the new fiscal year; however, if Ms. Harter is okay with it, he is too. A brief discussion followed. Ms. Anderson reached out to Mr. Warner via text regarding his perspective on the signage (will not be doable by the end of the month).

As far as the businesses, Mr. McGarry stated gift cards could be purchased this year and distributed next year. Mr. Aithal asked if there are any legal issues from a municipality perspective. Mr. McGarry stated he didn't think so, but if given to Ms. Anderson, she could discuss the matter further with Ms. Harter. Discussion returned to the viability of the signage v. gift cards.

Mr. Farina asked about possibly purchasing seasonal banners for the streetscape streetlights. Mr. Aithal asked the cost of banners. Mr. Farina stated he does not know the current cost. Ms. Anderson stated the company where the bows and garlands are purchased from also sell banners. A brief discussion followed.

MOTION: Prem Aithal motioned to authorize the purchase of \$1,000.00 of gift cards pending legal approval for potential promotional business activities for the Town of Haddam. Mike Farina second. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: Prem Aithal motioned to authorize the purchase of \$1,000.00 of seasonal decorations and/or banners and/or similar paraphernalia. Doreen Staskelunas second. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Batzner asked Ms. Anderson for clarification regarding the first motion pertaining to the purchase of the bows for the Higganum Streetscape light poles – will it stand or will it be a part of the \$1,000. Ms. Anderson stated she would like to keep it separate.

c. River Days

Ms. Anderson reported planning has begun and it will not fall under EDC this year. Ms. Anderson stated those on the Planning Committee are – Ms. Anderson, Cindy Sola, Kristy Benson, and Mike LeFleur, President, Haddam Lions Club – and noted that River Days has its own line item in the town budget. A committee meeting was held last week; and following tradition of holding the event on the Saturday after Labor Day, this year's event would have fallen on 11 September 2021. Even though EDC is not planning the event, Ms. Anderson was looking for feedback from the Commission about holding the event on 11 September given the significance of the day. Ms. Anderson reported that Mr. McGarry had suggested holding River Days on Sunday, 12 September, with a rain date of Saturday, 18 September.

Mr. Aithal stated he likes Mr. McGarry's ideas and finds it to be a reasonable move.

Ms. Anderson stated that Mr. LeFleur had reached out and suggested the idea of combining the Lions car show with River Days as the car show has gotten to be too big of an event for them to coordinate and they are hoping to scale it back to a cruise night. Ms. Anderson was agreeable, but gave Mr. LeFleur the history of DEEP being restrictive of what's allowable at the Haddam Meadows. Mr. LeFleur has the name of the DEEP officer who oversees the Meadows and has been told DEEP is open to allowing a slightly larger event (unclear where restrictiveness rumor came from). Given that the Lions car show was allowed to have music and food, it's believed that River Days will be able to have a bigger event – cruise night, vendors, and activities for kids; however, this is all pending approval from DEEP. Discussion followed at length as to the history of the event, the permit process, etc.

Mrs. Munster asked if it would be possible to hold the event at Eagle Landing State Park and coupling the event with East Haddam. Ms. Anderson stated Mr. LeFleur is the one who has the connection with the DEEP officer and will pass on the suggestion to him.

Neal Perron, Haddam Neck, stated consideration should be given to the Opera House conducting their shows and they may not want fireworks going off during a performance. In regard to 11 September (Patriots Day), Mr. Perron stated it is a very personal day for some and allows people a time to reflect on what happened on that day. Mr. Perron also stated Patriots Day is not only recognized in the United States, but is also recognized around the world.

d. Summer Meeting Schedule

Ms. Anderson reported the July meeting will be cancelled and the Commission will resume in-person meetings beginning in August.

6. Old Business

a. Farmers' Market

Ms. Anderson stated Ms. Benson reported there were over 250 people who attended opening day. The event went smoothly with no issues regarding traffic or vendors. Ms. Anderson asked that everyone check *SignUpGenius* to see where help may still be needed. Noted that most vendors take care of their own product and clean up is usually done by 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Anderson noted that the \$1,000 donation the Commission made to the Farmers' Market is going toward music; and music is booked every single week except for Kids Day.

Thank you's and recognition were distributed all around.

b. 1564 Saybrook Road Apartments – P&Z Update

Ms. Anderson reported P&Z approved the application for the apartments at their 20 May 2021 meeting. Ms. Anderson stated the presentation Jeff Hartmann, Founder & President, Elm Tree Partners, gave was outstanding. The plan is to have shovels in the ground in September 2021, pre-leasing by Summer 2022, and units open 2022. Ms. Anderson stated she read EDC's letter of support which the developer was very appreciative of.

105 Bridge Road, Former Eco-Tourism Property – Mr. McGarry reported the property has sold and the new owner is planning to go ahead with a proposal for 40 apartments – one- and two-bedroom family units.

7. Chairman's Report

Ms. Anderson reported on the following: **Tylerville and Haddam Center Sidewalks** – Tylerville project on hold due to the lack of bidders and will go out to bid again next year. Mr. McGarry stated it's not the Tylerville sidewalks that are on hold, but the Haddam Center sidewalks (area in front of the library) that are on hold (went out for bid and came well over budget, but will be rebid in the Spring of 2022). Mr. Mc-

Garry stated the last easements from the property owners have been obtained; however, they are still waiting to obtain easements from DEEP and DOT. Mr. McGarry stated he's hoping to bid the project in the Spring of 2022. **Town Budget** – Was approved at a town meeting. The mil rate will increase by less the one-half mil. Capital Plan also funded. **Board of Selectmen (BOS)** – The BOS authorized Mr. McGarry to sign an updated agreement with a broker for the sale or lease of HES. Adelbrook has officially fallen through. Noted that HES cannot be sold without a town meeting. **Grimm's Haunted House** – Planning is well under way and the event will be held at HES. **Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD)** – RiverCOG has posted to their website the updated RPOCD. **U.S. Coast Guard Band – Concert – Wednesday, 27 June 2021** – The Lions will be sponsoring a free concert at Parmelee Farm, Killingworth. **Roundabouts – Bridge Road/Saybrook Road and Route 82 Connector/Saybrook Road** – DOT held a meeting last night regarding the two roundabouts. Noted that the roundabouts are not meant to deal with traffic backups due to the bridge being opened. Mr. McGarry stated the DOT project team has been very accommodating and will match the lighting that will be installed on Bridge Road and extend sidewalks from where sidewalk ends at the Saybrook at Haddam down to the Connector. **Swing Bridge Renovations** – DOT has indicated that the renovations will help with the efficiency of the operation of the bridge. **Leverett Spencer House, Dublin Hill Road** – Mr. Farina asked if there was any update. Ms. Anderson and Mr. McGarry stated there has been no further information received since the May BOS meeting and the town hasn't currently committed any funding toward the project. **Cindy Sola** – Although Mrs. Sola will no longer be a member of EDC due to new endeavors, she will still be available for the farmers' market, River Days, etc. If anyone is interested in filling the position left by Mrs. Sola, please provide a resume/cover letter and attend a meeting or two to get a feel for what EDC is all about.

8. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Anderson tabled the approval of the 10 March 2021, 14 April 2021, and 11 May 2021 minutes.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

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Recording Clerk

The 14 July 2021 meeting has been cancelled.

**The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 11 August 2021,
and will be held in-person at the Community Center, 7 Candlewood Hill Road, Higganum.**