

**TOWN OF HADDAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TOWN HALL
21 FIELD PARK DRIVE, HADDAM, CT 06438
WEDNESDAY, 10 MAY 2023
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
*Subject to Approval by the Commission***

ATTENDANCE

X	Kate Anderson, Chairman
X	Kristy Benson Amarante
A	Cortney Emshwiller Swokla
X	Mike Farina
X	Mike Karam
A	David Law
A	Mark Lundgren
A	Robin Munster
X	John Pember
X	Doreen Staskelunas, Secretary (Left at 8:12 p.m.)
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

MOTION: Mike Farina motioned to approve the 10 May 2023 agenda as submitted. Doreen Staskelunas second. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment

There was no public present.

5. New Business

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

Ms. Anderson, as well as the other Commissioners, welcomed Mrs. Benson Amarante and Mr. Karam to the Commission. Ms. Anderson stated she will reach out to those Commissioners whose terms are expiring to see if they would like to be reappointed. A brief discussion followed.

b. Future Use of HES

Ms. Anderson reported the Board of Selectmen (BOS) held a special meeting on Monday, 1 May 2023, to review/vote on an application for the Connecticut Community Challenges Grant. Round 3 of this grant opened up and the application deadline was Wednesday, 3 May 2023. The application would be for a community/senior center that has been previously discussed and a developer, Jeff Hartmann, Elm Tree Partnership, (Blueway Commons Apartments) would build 33 units of affordable senior housing on the newer side of HES. The BOS approved the application.

Ms. Anderson noted that the timing of the application was not ideal. The application deadline came up very quickly and doesn't believe the relationship between the town and the developer had formed until the application period had already opened. Ms. Anderson stated there wasn't a lot of time to review everything that was received.

Ms. Anderson stated she voted in favor of the application because the program as a whole would have to go through multiple town meetings - BOS, Board of Finance (BOF), and P&Z - before being approved. Ms. Anderson also stated although all the details within the application haven't been finalized, there is a process where the details would be worked out before the town would vote on the project as a whole. Ms. Anderson stated she believes the State will view the application favorably as there is a need for affordable housing and Haddam has a market study to show that the town has a severe lack of affordable and senior housing. Ms. Anderson also believes from the State's point of view the town has a developer who would be committed to building the project. The proposed project would also include replacing the roof and using the grant money that Representative Christine Palm assisted in obtaining for the playground (playground project still in the works), as well as the sidewalk from HES down into the Center. Ms. Anderson reported the application was submitted last week and believes the Town will receive feedback sometime by the Commission's June meeting.

Mrs. Staskelunas asked if Blueway Commons had already looked at HES, where they would put the 33 units, and if they had a plan. Ms. Anderson stated yes; and they would be using the same architect who designed the Tylerville apartments. Ms. Anderson stated it is an out of state architect, but they were chosen because it was the same architect that designed the Essex Station apartments and the developer liked the looks of those apartments.

Ms. Anderson stated a second floor would be constructed in the gymnasium to create two stories. Mr. Karam asked if the structure would be torn down. Ms. Anderson stated it was her understanding that the structure would be renovated and the Town has a line item to renovate the roof. Ms. Anderson stated people will be kept updated.

c. 2023 Farmers' Market – Continued Discussion – Vote on 2023 Budget

Ms. Anderson reported the Market will open on Saturday, 3 June 2023, and the discussion that was tabled in February was for a budget request for \$1,000 for music sponsorship which EDC has done since 2020 as well as an additional \$1,000 for one time startup costs (marketing, signage, tent, table, grill top, etc.). The Commission reviewed a budget runoff, dated 2 May 2023. Ms. Anderson stated she did approve an invoice for port-o-potties from the Fall Festival, approximately \$200, which was not shown on the runoff. Mr. Pember asked if the budget would remain until 30 June 2023. Ms. Anderson stated yes. Ms. Anderson also stated the Commission had approved a new holiday tree for the gazebo, up to \$300, and will check with Higganum Hardware to see if it had been ordered.

Volunteers and Eggs - Mrs. Benson Amarante distributed handouts for volunteers and for egg farmers. Mrs. Staskelunas suggested contacting the Cook family and Mrs. Batzner suggested contacting 4-H groups for egg donations. Mr. Pember asked what the volunteers would need to do. Mrs. Benson Amarante stated set up/break down, unload/loading vehicles, theme days are usually more busy (help run events), fill in during food or bathroom breaks, etc. Ms. Anderson suggesting notifying Vinal for community service hours. Discussion followed in regard to other groups that may be able to help - aligning volunteers to specific theme days.

Benches and Picnic Tables - Mr. Farina asked about the purchase of benches for Kelsey Park across the street from Da Vinci (Village Parks Society should be addressed regarding this). Mrs. Batzner stated there are two benches at Public Works and Mr. Corsa had indicated that the two could be used at HES for the Farmers' Market. Ms. Anderson stated Park and Rec has indicated they have two picnic tables and a bench that can be used. Discussion followed regarding the bench and table on the Green being relocated to HES.

Events Signs/Seasonal Flags/Holiday Decorations - Discussion followed in regard to a large hanging banner, an electronic message board (belongs to Emergency Management), seasonal flags on the light poles, and the purchase of holiday decorations. Ms. Anderson stated that it's only fair that EDC provide Tyllerville with the same holiday decorations has Higganum - snowflakes, lighted garland, and bows. Snowflakes approx. \$250; garlands \$180 for 18 light poles (\$5,000 plus shipping \$500-\$600. Ms. Anderson reported she had spoken to the BOF chairman regarding this and he recommended obtaining a quote and that the purchase/cost be split between two years as it would be a large expense. This would be presented to the BOS, sent on to the BOF, and it would be a one-time authorization expenditure for the full amount. If approved, the BOF would figure out where the funding would come from. Ms. Anderson suggested if EDC still has funding at the end of this year, offering it to go towards the decorations. Mrs. Staskelunas stated some of the garland will need to be replaced in Higganum (gazebo). Ms. Anderson stated she believes that can be purchased next fiscal year.

Fall Festival - Ms. Anderson reported if the budget is approved at the town meeting, this event will have its own line item. This will make it easier to keep track of expenses.

Beautification Committee - Potential Partnership with EDC - Mr. Karam asked if EDC could partner with the Beautification Committee to assist with costs as the Committee is helping the community and businesses. Ms. Anderson stated the fiscal year ends 30 June and recommended that three quotes be obtained for the mulch and the Commission will vote on it. Mr. Karam briefly discussed his initial plans - remove small evergreen bush and reseed/plant/mulch by the Higganum Center sign (mulch \$100, plants/seeds \$200-\$250). Mrs. Staskelunas asked up to \$500. Mr. Karam stated yes. Discussion followed regarding the Committee being different from the Garden Club and the Garden Club having specific locations they maintain; helped needed to weed and mulch at the Senior Center (Linda Talbott), and cleaning up the barn at the Annex. Mrs. Staskelunas stated there is a garden club and horticulture club at the high school that may be able to assist.

Bike Racks - Mr. Farina asked if there are still bike racks in the Center. Mrs. Batzner stated there should be bike racks on the Green, in-between the Village Market and Teri's Package Store, and by Hi-Way Package Store (Conservation Commission paid for the racks). Mrs. Benson Amarante stated there's one behind HES and it would probably be better served to the front of HES.

Mr. Pember asked if the Commission could vote on budget items via email in the event the June meeting is cancelled. Ms. Anderson stated no, that a virtual meeting would need to be held in order for the public to be aware of the matter.

Wayfinding - Mr. Karam asked if bike racks, benches, and picnic tables couldn't be a part of this and work it into the plan. Ms. Anderson stated Park and Rec are looking for more ways to get involved and may be very willing to assist. They are a small committee, but mighty.

Goals - Ms. Anderson stated at the June or July meeting the Commission can strategize for the next fiscal year; and asked Mr. Karam to have a general idea of projects that need support and a budget to go along with it for Commission review to at least plan and support some of the projects.

Roundabouts/Swing Bridge Repair - Mr. Karam asked when work will begin. Ms. Anderson stated DOT is not committing to a date; however, work is not supposed to begin until the Swing Bridge Project is completed. Ms. Anderson suggested people sign up for the alerts from DOT.

MOTION: Doreen Staskelunas motioned to approve the \$2,000 needed to support the Farmers' Market for 2023. Mike Farina second. Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: Doreen Staskelunas motioned to approve up to \$500 for mulch and plantings for the Beautification Committee to be used where needed in the Town of Haddam. Mike Farina second. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Anderson informed Mrs. Benson Amarante that she would fill out a check request form for the funds approved for the Farmers' Market and Mr. Karam that she would check with the Finance Dept. how best to proceed with his approved funds (may be best to purchase the products outright and then submit receipts for reimbursement; also discussed tax exempt status).

Mr. Pember asked Ms. Anderson if there were any other expenses that are not shown on the runoff. Ms. Anderson stated the Commission did approve up to \$300 for a new Christmas tree, but it's unclear at this time whether it's been ordered or not. Mr. Pember stated there's approximately \$1,000 remaining. Previous discussion had indicated possibly reserving the funding for the purchase of holiday decorations.

Mr. Karman asked if a new River Days banner is needed. Ms. Anderson stated no one has been able to locate the old banner. Mr. Karam and Mr. Farina stated it was their understanding that the banner had been located (Dawn Tarbetsky, Assistant Town Clerk, found it). Mrs. Benson Amarante stated that the old farmer's market signs have been located as well.

d. POCD Action Items

Ms. Anderson stated the Commission should focus on the POCD as well as Goals and Strategic Planning; and asked that these items be placed higher on the June agenda.

14 June 2023 Meeting - Reschedule - Mrs. Staskelunas noted that high school graduation is 15 June 2023 and the Commission's next meeting is 14 June 2023. Ms. Anderson stated she has a conflict for 14 June 2023. Discussion followed regarding rescheduling the meeting to Tuesday, 6 June 2023. Ms. Anderson will contact the First Selectman's Office to confirm a meeting location. Ms. Anderson noted if additional funding is to be spent, the Commission will need to vote on it on 6 June 2023.

e. Wayfinding Campaign or Signage

Mr. Karam stated the bike rack audit can be added to this agenda item; and once this is completed, perhaps additional funding will be needed. Mr. Karam stated he's interested in helping with the signage and asked if the old sign is still around. Mrs. Batzner stated three employees looked through the attic at Public Works and the sign was not found. Mrs. Batzner also stated she contacted the man who originally spearheaded the building of the sign and he believed the sign was still at the garage (also provided the name of the individual who designed the sign). Mrs. Batzner will contact the designer. Discussion followed in regard to how to move forward with this - leave as a standing EDC agenda item under Old Business, a subcommittee could be formed that would report back to the Commission; and obtaining grant funding for signage (Chamber of Commerce, Gateway Commission, Sustainable CT, CT Main Street, River COG).

f. Higganum May Markets

Mrs. Staskelunas asked if there are any May Markets scheduled. Mrs. Batzner stated Kristin Melnick asked at the February meeting that this be considered as an agenda item as she had a request for funding from the Commission. As Mrs. Melnick was not in attendance, no further discussion took place.

g. Snowflake Electrical Problems

Ms. Batzner reported Public Works has obtained a new light pole to replace the one that was backed into by Frontier's fiber optic crew and it will be installed when the electrician is available.

h. Muckets – Follow Up

Mrs. Staskelunas asked if Greg McKenna, Nutmeg Pharmacy, had received the base to his Mucket. Ms. Anderson stated Mr. McKenna has received all pieces that were received from the company.

i. Updates

Ms. Anderson reported on the following:

Rossi Property - No change; however, Bob McGarry, First Selectman, did mention at the 8 May 2023 BOS meeting that some confusion had been created by a recent Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Developer who would be interested in a piece of or all of the Rossi property and the selection of a developer. Greg McKenna, Nutmeg Pharmacy, has been interested in constructing a building on the site; but since he's not a contractor, a development company that he would work with is the company that submitted the proposal. The Town is in discussion with the developer and nothing has been confirmed at this time. If anything were to transpire, a town meeting is required. Mr. Karam asked if any other developers had submitted proposals. Ms. Anderson stated no, and that the closing deadline has past; however, the Town can go out to bid again if needed. Unclear what has been discussed beyond a pharmacy building.

HES – Previously discussed.

Higganum Cove - The Cove Committee in conjunction with the Haddam Historical Society held a site walk on Sunday, 16 April 2023. The history of the site as well as what plans the Committee is contemplating for the site were discussed. Ms. Anderson recommended the site be visited as the Committee continues to make great progress.

Scovil Hoe Open House - Parker Benjamin, the developer, held an Open House on Sunday, 30 April 2023. The ceremony was very nice. Have not received a lot regarding prospective tenants. Mr. Karam stated as he's one of the applicants, he's received some information from Shannon Healy, Project Manager - a pasta company, coffee shop/cafe, no anchor store yet. Ms. Anderson will try to obtain more information for the next meeting. **Environmental Remediation** - Scheduled to start this summer. The bid packages that the environmental consultant prepares are almost complete.

Phantom Brewery - Scheduled to move into the building next to Dunkin (Higganum). Bill Warner, Town Planner, had a meeting on Tuesday, 9 May 2023, with an established restaurant (not a chain; locally owned) that's interested in opening a restaurant within Phantom. Food is good and it would be a good fit.

Former Citizens Bank - Unable to obtain any information as to what is taking place at the former bank.

Shad Museum - Mr. Karam reported the Shad Museum will be moved prior to Memorial Day.

Haddam Center and Bridge Road Sidewalks - **Bridge Road Sidewalks** - completed. **Haddam Center** - Finishing construction of Phase 1. Phase 2 will begin. **Potential Sidewalks** - Mr. Farina asked about a rumor concerning sidewalks along Route 154 to Landing Road. Mr. Karam stated Mr. Warner spoke in regard to sidewalks from Dunkin (Higganum) to HES. Ms. Anderson stated the only sidewalks she is aware of are the ones from HES down into the Center and Rossi down to the Cove which are associated with a grant. Discussion followed in regard to the installation of pedestrian crossing lights at HES and at the Senior Center/Brainerd Memorial Library.

Candlewood Hill Realignment - Mr. Farina asked if the realignment near Scovil is still going to take place. Mrs. Batzner stated it's being worked on, but does not know when it will take place.

j. Budget and 2022/2023 Goals and Strategic Plan

Previously discussed and to be discussed further in June.

k. Reappointments

Ms. Anderson stated she would reach out to those Commissioners who are up for reappointment. Mrs. Batzner will email the appointment list to her.

6. Old Business

a. Tylerville Construction Planning Updates – Continued Discussion

Previously discussed.

7. Chairman's Report

Town Meeting - Vote on the Budget - Ms. Anderson reported that the Town Meeting will be held on, Wednesday, 17 May 2023, to vote on the town's budget. If the Town budget passes as is, the BOF will meet immediately after to set the mil rate (proposed recommendation is an increase of 1.54 mils). The Board of Education budget passed at referendum on Tuesday, 2 May 2023. **Capital Plan** - The Town is finally getting a better handle on capital projects both getting caught up on them as well as planning for the future so the Town doesn't fall behind again. The capital projects for the next fiscal year will be approximately \$4 million and approximately \$3.3 million of that is already covered by money that has already been set aside or a lot of it is state grant funding. Things are getting done, but not at a huge expense to the taxpayers. **Grand List** - Has broken \$1 million - apartments, the wellness center, and there are still have a couple of businesses coming. **P&Z – Proposal to Rezone Two Parcels from Residential to Commercial** - Large turnout at the hearing/meeting and the proposal failed. The Commission could only consider the zoning amendment before them and not the business being proposed that may go on the parcels. Residents concerned an approval could open up other business opportunities that the applicant was not proposing. Mr. Karam stated the POCD recommends all new commercial development be in the centers. Mr. Karam also stated the area has historical significance (national register) and the viewshed. Mr. Pember stated someone could build a massive house. Mrs. Batzner stated two - single family, two - two family, or 36 apartment units. Discussion followed.

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

Tabled.

Recording Clerk's Note: The 16 November 2022 meeting was cancelled, the 8 March 2023 meeting was postponed, and the 12 April 2023 meeting was cancelled.

9. Adjournment

MOTION: John Pember motioned to adjourn. Kristy Benson Amarante second. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner

Bunny Hall Batzner, Recording Clerk

**The next meeting is Wednesday, 6 June 2023,
at the Community Center, 7 Candlewood Hill Road, Higganum, CT.**