

Town of Stonington
Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes for June 14, 2012
Human Services Building 7:00pm

Attendance: Blunt White, Robynne Madison, Paul Burgess, Amy Arruda, Dan Oliverio, Wendy Bury, Les Bray, Peter Glankoff

Absent: Ed Planeta, Ed Hart, Nat Arata

Town Guests: Selectman Haberek, Selectwoman McAnaly, Town Assessor Marsha Standish

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Call to Order: 7:05pm

Approval of Prior Minutes: May10, 2012

Motion: Wendy Bury

Second: Les Bray

Old Business:

EDC Website – Wendy Bury provided the Commission with the analytics update for the prior month. Traffic has normalized back to an average of 80 hits per month. Common searches were around the topics of properties, demographics and economic incentives. It was also noted that the EDC website host, CMB, has also been referring clients to view the site as well. Amy Arruda is working on the transition of the site maintenance from our current provider to the newly formed website team on the EDC. Those members are Amy Arruda, Wendy Bury and Robynne Madison. The targeted deadline for transition is June 30, 2012.

Selectman Haberek has indicated that the website for the EDC will also be included on the Town of Stonington letterhead.

Business Outreach – An update was provided to the EDC by Selectman Ed Haberek.

- Jenesis Surgical is in operation and in the process of adding scientists to their staff.
- Selectman Haberek attended a medical industry show for potential new business leads for Stonington in Philadelphia this past month. He was surprised by the poor representation of Connecticut at the show compared to that of neighboring and much smaller states.
- A local construction company has shown interest in property located off Maritime Drive, Mystic potentially looking at the feasibility of the site for a warehouse facility. This is a property currently owned by the Mystic Aquarium.
- The old Maple Breeze Park property has also been of interest to a number of parties. Potential use could be retail.
- The McDonalds on Rte 2/ Liberty Crossing at the entrance of Stop and Shop and Newport Federal is going up quickly. No golden arches to be erected, 'swoosh' logo used at its other sites where the arches do not conform to zoning regulations.
- An Ambassador from the Philippines visited Stonington and met with several businesses in regards to expanding the Philippines trade mission. A/Z Construction, Carlin Construction and Cable Components all met with the Ambassador.

Commission member Wendy Bury provided and update regarding the special use request before Borough PCZ for the Velvet Mill property. The request was tabled via a 65 day extension so that the owner could work out details and take into plan the concern of neighbors to the Mill as it relates to parking and plantings around the building. The original request was to gain a special use permit for 180,000 sq ft

of space. That request has been revised down to 31,000 sq ft. Citing cautious support on part by the Borough P&Z, this effort has taken a very long time to resolve.

Budget Items - The Commission voted to approve the expenditure of funds for the upcoming fiscal years membership dues to the Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce as well as the Westerly Pawcatuck Chamber of Commerce.

- 5 in favor
- 2 Opposed
- 1 Abstain

POCD Planning Update – No new updates

82 Mechanic Street (Yardney location) – No new updates

Initiative to broaden allowed uses in M1 zone – See motion in New Business Budget Items.

Summit Street Development – Harry Austin Drive – No new updates.

New Business:

Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center – Maggie Jones, Executive Director, along with Steven Dodd, Chair of the "The Campaign to Save the Coogan Farm" and Board member Bill Smith presented a Power Point with the intent of educating the EDC about the DPNC's initiative to purchase and preserve the Coogan Farm. They noted its historical significance and reasons to protect it from development. The parcel, 34 acres in size, is zoned RM15 – Moderate Density Residential by right with some commercial development allowed by Special Permit. It connects 2 watershed areas, the Mystic River and Pequotsepos Brook. The property also links parcels owned and managed by the DPNC and the Avalonia Land Conservatory. The opportunity exists to create a greenway corridor and later for the DPNC or Town to build out amenities such as hiking trails and bike routes linking the Mystic Aquarium, DPNC and Mystic Seaport to downtown Mystic. If the Campaign is able to raise the \$3.5MM in private and grant funds the property will be purchased (DPNC has under contract for \$2.8MM, contract expires in March 2013). They also made the proposition that acquisition of the parcel would help the Mystic Brand, attract the active tourist, and increase quality of life.

EDC member Peter Glankoff recommended that this vision be included in the POCD and that long range thought put into the economic possibilities to turn around a declining tourist population. The property is in the heart of the 'golden triangle.'

EDC member Wendy Bury noted that with mill vacancy high it would be more prudent for the Town to focus on those facilities rather than promoting the development of new land.

Mystic Senior Living – BROM Builders, the EDC did not take any action on BROM's proposal requesting reduced Building Permit fees. The EDC believes that any support would be premature given that BROM still has not purchased the property. Once the sale has been completed, the EDC will revisit the proposal.

Budget Items – encumbrance before FYE. The EDC currently has a surplus of FYE 6/2012 monies, \$3M, which if encumbered for a specific purpose, can be rolled into the FY13 budget. The EDC has been considering the need for a zoning text amendment broadening allowed uses in the M-

1 zone. The designation of M-1 (Manufacturing) severely limits the types of businesses that can go into these spaces creating a hardship for both the property owners and the Town due to decreased tax revenue that could be generated from investments that would be made to get a building occupied. EDC believes an increase in uses is necessary in order to encourage revitalization of mill sites (particularly 82 and 100 Mechanic Street). Chairman White referenced the Pawcatuck Parking study that was conducted for EDC by a third party consultant in which professional services were used to conduct a workshop and prepare a report. The Parking Study resulted in a successful zoning text amendment approved by P&Z. In this case the deliverable would be a proposal to the Planning & Zoning Commission for a text amendment broadening allowed uses in the M1 zone.

A motion was made by Chairman White to encumber \$3,000 from the FY12 EDC budget and engage professional services (consultant) to conduct a study of M-1 properties and deliver a recommendation to EDC and PZC for a zoning text amendment to increase allowed uses.

Selectman Haberek will set up a meeting with PZC to get a feel for the commissions' appetite to consider a change in M-1 zoning text.

Motion: Blunt White

Second: Dan Oliverio/ Paul Burgess

All members in favor.

Marsha Standish, Town Assessor shared her thoughts about issues affecting the growth of the Grand List and there was good discussion.

Adjournment: 9:30pm

Respectfully Submitted by: Robynne Madison

Approved 8/13/2012
Blunt White
Chairman