



**TOWN OF MADISON
CONNECTICUT 06443
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Approved November 12, 2009

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Madison Economic Development Commission held on Thursday, October 8, 2009, 7:30 p.m. at the Madison Town Campus.

Present: Commissioners Peter Thomas, Ann Foley, Edwin Moore, Hank Yaggi

Also present: Bill Gladstone, Selectman, Marilyn Ozols, Planning Officer; Tom Banisch, Kevin Garrity, observers

Peter Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

1. Public comment. Mr. Yaggi introduced Mr. Garrity of Garrity Industries who he had invited to attend the EDC meeting. He felt that Mr. Garrity could provide input on his experience with trying to work through the regulatory process and successfully accomplish a successful project in Town.
2. Approval of minutes. On motion made by Mr. Moore, and seconded by Mr. Yaggi, the Commission voted to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of June 11, 2009 as submitted. Mr. Thomas, Mr. Ball and Mr. Yaggi voted in favor of the motion and Mr. Moore abstained.
3. Discussion on EDC budget balance and recommendation re: project funding. Mr. Yaggi commented that it is difficult to plan to use budget funds to conduct Commission business when attendance of a full Commission is not consistent and direction from Town officials is not being provided.

Mr. Thomas discussed the recommendation in the budget for a staff person. He noted that currently if a company calls the Town looking for information to possibly pursue an economic development project, there is no specific staff person to provide assistance. Mr. Gladstone noted that a planning and economic development staff position was discussed at the last Board of Selectmen's meeting. He believes that it makes economic sense to invest in a planning and economic development person who has the potential to improve the economic development climate in Town.

Peter Thomas, Chairman
Hank Yaggi – Vice Chair
Anne Foley – Secretary

Jim Ball
Ryan Duques
Edwin Moore

Mr. Garrity suggested that the Commission work on the development of a list of space that is available for market development, assist with the steps needed to obtain approvals and assist with locating appropriate businesses for these sites. The Commission can assist with encouraging ideas that help make the acquisition or rental of property for economic development activity an easier process. Mr. Gladstone agreed that it would be beneficial to identify space that is available for economic development activity and then help get these sites through the approval process.

Mr. Thomas commented that it would be helpful to develop criteria for what the Commission views as ideas the Town will support in the physical environment of a development.

Mr. Gladstone commented that there has been a tradition of saying no to change and this is not serving Madison. It will be important to determine what criteria will receive the support of the public and allow projects to move forward. Mr. Thomas agreed it would be helpful to work to develop ways to get a project through rather than focus on ways to turn it down. This begins with being more proactive rather than reactive.

4. Update report on Bradley Road Vision Study Project. Mr. Gladstone commented that he views the Commission's first priority project to be to turn the Bradley Road Vision Study into zoning regulations followed by activity to conduct similar studies on other sites such as East Gate and West Gate.

5. Update on Economic Summit. Mr. Banisch commented that one issue that needs to be addressed to increase business opportunities is the septic system issue. This is particularly important to be able to support increased restaurant opportunities. Mr. Gladstone discussed the idea of creating incentives that would assist with the revitalization of downtown. He views businesses made up of a number of small entities that would include restaurants as a positive type of development in this area. While tax abatements have been shown to attract business, they are not practical.

Mr. Thomas commented that the economic summit is important to providing an opportunity for businesses and property owners to get together with the Town to discuss relevant issues. It allows the Town to make its efforts to assist local business more visible. It will be important to encourage the Board of Selectmen to attend the 2010 summit. Ms. Foley recommended that commercial realtors be encouraged to attend the forum.

Mr. Moore suggested that some discussion focus on what the Town can do to plan for the best course of action when the country begins to come out of the bad economy.

Mr. Garrity suggested that if the public begins to see activity begin to move forward in a positive direction they will want to become more involved with the Commission and its activities.

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6. Update by Marilyn Ozols. Mr. Thomas commented that there is a need for the Economic Development Commission, ACCA, Chamber of Commerce and Planning and Zoning Commission to increase communication with each especially because a substantial amount of planning activity has recently been occurring. It will be helpful to get a bigger group of supporters behind EDC activities.

Mr. Thomas request that Ms. Ozols provided input to the Commission on ways the Town can assist to expedite the approval process for an economic development project and to discuss ways to make the zoning regulations clearer and easier to access.

Mr. Ozols noted that they are working on a new draft with a subcommittee of the Planning Zoning Commission, ACCA and the EDC specifically looking at Wall Street. They are working to make the design materials and standards more clear and are looking at commercial district regulations to help them better match. They understand that the village district and commercial standards include some conflicts that have made it more difficult for some projects. She noted that one idea they are looking at is dividing Wall Street into bands from the street to the back of the lot.

Mr. Thomas commented that this is the appropriate time to get make recommendations for items to include during this opportunity to work with a draft. He noted that he and Mr. Ball have been attending to represent the EDC and he agreed to get a copy of the draft document to all Commission members and to Mr. Branisch and Mr. Garrity for their review. He noted that this document will be a part of the marketing plan.

In response to a question by Ms. Foley regarding the septic systems on Wall Street, Ms. Ozols commented that some systems are in good condition but others have some weaknesses. Ms. Foley commented that the septic system issue needs to be addressed in order to encourage more restaurants in the area. Mr. Thomas recommended that an effort be made to have a septic system specialist attend as a speaker at the forum. Mr. Gladstone commented that he believes shared septic systems are the way to go in the future and he agreed that this would be a good forum topic.

7. Review Milone and MacBroom work on Tuxis Pond.

8. Discussion on Main Street membership. Mr. Thomas recommended that a representative from Main Street be invited to address the Commission after the forum has been held.

9. Discussion on Grant Applications. There was no discussion on grant applications.

Peter Thomas, Chairman
Hank Yaggi – Vice Chair
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10. Review of commission member commitments. Mr. Thomas recommended that commission member commitments be discussed further at the November meeting.

11. Discussion on list of 10 items prepared by Commission members for consideration for future EDC projects. Mr. Thomas noted that the list of 9 issues were outlined in the minutes of the September meeting. He recommended that there be further discussion on these issues at the November meeting.

12. Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Banisch commented that the EDC should be familiar with the Plan of Conservation and Development and should comment on issues relevant to the Plan such as the recent land swap issue.

Mr. Thomas noted that ACCA and the Planning and Zoning Commission will oversee the process to insure that any plans adhere to existing codes.

13. Discussion on Commission Mission Statement. Mr. Gladstone commented that the stated goal of economic development is to promote growth that is consistent with the nature of the Town to include a healthy retail environment in the Bradley Road and downtown area. He noted that the new Senior Center will create some activity and there will also be some economic development growth opportunities at the Academy School.

Mr. Thomas noted that the EDC was re-chartered under Selectman Scarpati with a Mission Statement to look for ways to increase revenue sources without changing the character of the Town.

Mr. Yaggi commented that in the current environment, one item the Commission should focus on is to minimize the loss of businesses in Town. He suggested that a meeting of business property owners would be beneficial. He suggested that the development of a marketing package to help address some of the concerns of business would also help as would an effort to make the rules and regulations more clear and guidance on the direction the Town is moving with regard to economic development.

Mr. Garrity commented that people come to Madison for the quality of life so he agrees it is important that this asset be preserved to be able to attract business. He commented that the Commission is working with a relatively small budget for the work it needs to complete. He agrees it is important that the appropriate departments and agencies get together to provide needed support.

Mr. Gladstone suggested that the Commission work on re-writing the Mission Statement and provide it to him to give to the Board of Selectmen to begin the process of moving the Commission forward in a direction they feel would benefit the Town.

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Hank Yaggi – Vice Chair
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14. Old business. There was no discussion under old business.
15. New business. There was no discussion under new business.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled Madison Economic Development Commission meeting will be held on November 12, 2009, 7:30 p.m. at the Madison Town Campus.

Terry Holland-Buckley
Clerk

Peter Thomas, Chairman
Hank Yaggi – Vice Chair
Anne Foley – Secretary

Jim Ball
Ryan Duques
Edwin Moore