



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

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Approved January 14, 2010

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Madison Economic Development Commission held on Thursday, December 10, 2009, 7:30 p.m. at the Madison Town Campus.

Present: Commissioners Peter Thomas, Jim Ball, Ryan Duques, Ann Foley, Edwin Moore, Hank Yaggi, Mark Casparino

Also present: Filmore McPherson, First Selectman; Marilyn Ozols, Planning Officer; Kevin Garrity

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

1. Public comment. Mr. Thomas welcomed Mr. McPherson, First Selectman to the meeting.

On motion made by Mr. Yaggi, and seconded by Mr. Casparino, the Commission voted unanimously to amend the agenda to discuss item #6 following #1.

6. Update by Marilyn Ozols. Ms. Ozols noted that there is currently not much commercial activity before the Planning and Zoning Commission.

In response to a question by Mr. Thomas, Ms. Ozols provided the Town's perspective on a recent restaurant/office development project. Ms. Ozols noted that this project was for an existing use so they did not need Planning and Zoning approval. All of the issues that developed were related to health regulations and the building code. She noted that the applicant had come in early to begin the permitting process, however, they then made a number of changes which caused delays. There was a need to apply for a change in the building code and they worked on a number of options to meet the code for the office portion of the project. After submitting a revised plan, they decided to go back to their original plan so this required a re-submittal. She does not believe there was any action that could have been taken by the Town to move the project along any quicker.

In response to a question by Mr. Yaggi about how applicants are able to obtain information on the approval process, Ms. Ozols noted that the Department has been discussing the ideas of putting together a guideline that outlines the approval process to help applicants understand the

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steps that must be taken to move a project through the process.

Mr. Garrity suggested that it might be helpful to ask this business to come in and talk to the EDC about their experience with the process to gain insight from the other side.

Ms. Ozols noted that, in the past, when an applicant comes in with a commercial project, staff from the appropriate Town departments would have a meeting and work together on reviewing the process. She believes that this was very helpful and she believes it would be beneficial to begin this practice again. Mr. Garrity commented that if this process was successful in the past he agrees that it would make sense to begin to hold these staff meetings again. Since there are currently not a large number of applicants, this would be a good time to begin this procedure. He also recommended that the Town develop a flow chart of how the process integrates with the various Town departments. Mr. Thomas requested that Mr. Yaggi be invited to attend any of these meetings in the future to serve as a liaison for the EDC. He also requested that Mr. Yaggi incorporate this process into the marketing plan he has taken on as a project. Ms. Ozols agreed to advise Mr. Yaggi when any meetings are scheduled. Mr. Yaggi requested information on any written policies to review to get up to date. Mr. Casparino and Mr. Duques agreed they would also like to become involved with assisting businesses through the approval process. They agree that providing a business interested in starting or expanding a business in Madison with the personal touch of working with Town representatives would improve the current system. Mr. Duques further commented that the EDC could be of assistance in helping businesses understand the various regulations. Ms. Foley commented that she agrees education efforts need to also be a part of the process.

Mr. McPherson commented that he likes the idea of having an EDC advocate for businesses who are applying to expand or move to Madison. Mr. Thomas noted that this is one reason the First Selectman has been encouraged to support an EDC staff person to answer phone calls and serve as the initial contact when a business contacts the Town. Mr. Yaggi noted that this individual should also work into being the advocate for specific projects who will help the developer through the process. In response to a question by Mr. Ball, Mr. McPherson noted that he considers hiring an EDC staff person a very important project and they are working on appropriating the funds needed to fund the position for 4 months this fiscal year. In response to a question by Mr. Garrity, Mr. McPherson noted that an existing staff who could work on these projects would only be a temporary fill-in. The best way to move forward is with a new staff person. In the meantime, Mr. McPherson agreed to see if a voice mail or e-mail address could be established for EDC activities. Mr. Moore commented that, while hiring an EDC staff person is important, he also believes the Commission needs to be aware that some of the reduction on economic development activity is due to the economic climate which is not working for anyone right now. Mr. Thomas commented that with the economy now near the bottom, he believes this is an important time to work on these issues and try to encourage business activity as the economy bounces back.

Mr. Thomas referenced an article in the newspaper saying that Guilford needs to be more business friendly. He expressed concern that, since Guilford has more programs in place to work

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with and assist business, if businesses view Guilford as unfriendly, they might view Madison as being even more uncooperative. Ms. Foley noted that she is aware of a business that recently moved from Madison to Guilford and the representative indicated that they had a very positive experience.

Mr. Ozols provided information on the proposal for 64 Wall Street which involved tearing down an existing structure and construction of a double building consisting of two 2 story buildings connected by a walkway. Since Wall Street is a part of the downtown village district there are strict standards and it was difficult to design the project to have a residential façade as required by the regulations. Ms. Ozols noted that there had been efforts to advise the project developer of the rules and regulations and provide them with input on ways to meet the regulations. However, they always have the right to apply for modifications. Ms. Ozols noted that the developer has now reapplied for a smaller building that complies with regulations and parking and the PZC has approved the new project.

Ms. Ozols noted that there has been an effort over the past two years to clarify the standards in the downtown village district to make interpretation of the regulations easier. Groups involved in the downtown village district include ACCA, which is advisory to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Downtown Village District, the Madison Center Project, which was appointed by the Board of Selectmen to work on the redevelopment plan for the Boston Post Road, and the Wall Street sub-Committee which works to make sure regulations are consistent with the design standards. Mr. Thomas noted that they plan to use the Wall Street model to apply to other areas to insure that standards and regulations are consistent. Mr. Garrity commented that he believes it is important to make sure there is a way to coordinate all of the various committees to work together and to make it easier, quicker and clearer to understand the Town's regulations and process.

In summary, Mr. Yaggi commented that there is a need for the Commission to learn the process, simplify the process and communicate the process. Mr. Casparino repeated that he would like to work on an EDC sub-Committee that would work on this project. Ms. Foley suggested that this project include a review of Madison's process with other towns to see what is working well in other areas. Mr. Duques questioned if it would be possible to use EDC budget funds to hire an architecture student to assist. Mr. Thomas noted that an individual from the Yale School of Design has been of assistance to the Commission in the past and Mr. Yaggi agreed to make this contact. Mr. Thomas agreed that the formation of a sub-Committee to work on these issues is a priority which should be the focus of the Commission at this time while members continue to work on other issues such as the forum.

On motion made by Mr. Yaggi, and seconded by Ms. Foley, the Commission voted unanimously to establish a sub-Committee to work on learning, simplifying and communicating the approval process for businesses to be established or expanded on in Madison, as a priority Commission project with Mr. Yaggi and Mr. Casparino to serve as the lead members on the sub-Committee with assistance from Mr. Duques.

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Ms. Ozols advised the Commission members of a project to divide the Town into four residential districts which would provide more flexibility and make residential development on an existing lot simpler. A density requirement component is included. She noted that additional information on the project can be obtained from the Town website.

2. Approval of minutes. The following corrections were made to the minutes of the regular meeting of November 12, 2009:

Page 2, item 1, 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph, second line, the word “participation” should be replaced with “action”

Page 3, item 4, first sentence, “standard’s project” should be added at the end of the sentence after the word “design”.

On motion made by Mr. Thomas, and seconded by Mr. Casparino, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 12, 2009 as corrected.

3. Discussion on EDC Commissioner assignments and implementation plans. Mr. Thomas noted that, while the new sub-Committee regarding the approval process is the Commission priority, Commission members should also continue to work on their assignments outlined at the November meeting.

4. Discussion of attendance requirement and report to be submitted to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Thomas provided members with a copy of the 2009 attendance schedule he compiled from the minutes. He asked members to review the list and advise him of any errors since the list needs to be submitted to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Duques noted that he missed more meetings than he wanted due to out of Town commitments but he should be able to improve his attendance record next year.

5. Review of letter to be submitted to the Board of Selectmen for funding the 3D modeling program designed for Bradley Road by Planimetrics. Mr. Thomas noted that a request will be submitted for \$18,000 from the Town’s centralized planning budget for the 3D modeling for Bradley Road. Departments are able to apply to use some of the budgeted money for a specific project. The 3D modeling program will allow the Town to design and create images of proposals for this area. He recommended that Planimetrics be asked to do a presentation on the program to explain and show what the program would be able to do for the Town. Ms. Ozols agreed that it would be helpful to have Planimetrics come to a meeting and do a presentation.

7. Discussion of grant possibilities as forwarded to the Commission by Commissioner Moore. Mr. Thomas noted that Mr. Moore had sent out an e mail with information on grant possibilities to members of the Commission.

8. Discussion on coordination of Main Street initiative. Mr. Moore noted that he has been in contact with a representative of Main Street and was advised that they rely on State funding

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and have been affected by State reductions in funding. They also receive some funding from CL&P. They will be putting together an analysis for Madison and will be able to get the Town moving in the right direction.

9. Discussion of EDC's potential involvement in the new Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Thomas requested that Mr. McPherson advise him what information will be needed from the EDC for the new Plan of Conservation and Development and to also provide information on the timeline for this project.

10. Discussion on revision of the EDC's Mission Statement. Mr. Thomas requested that discussion on the revision on the EDC's mission statement be postponed at this time.

11. Discussion and planning of the calendar of EDC meetings for 2010. Mr. Thomas provided members with a copy of the calendar of EDC meetings for 2010 as follows:

January 14  
February 11  
March 11  
April 8  
May 13  
June 10  
July 8  
August 12  
September 9  
October 14  
November 11  
December 9

Mr. Thomas requested that Mr. Ball schedule the meeting room for the regular meetings.

12. Old business. Mr. Yaggi suggested that it might be helpful to create a trial business and follow it through the approval process to determine where problems with the flow develop. Mr. Thomas recommended that the trial business be a restaurant in the downtown village district since this would provide the best opportunity to find possible problems since the process for a restaurant in this area would need to meet regulations for parking, design, septic system, and health issues. He agrees that following the process through would help with the development of a road map for approvals.

13. New business. Mr. Ball noted that he had conducted a survey of the Town and has come up with 11 vacant retail properties in the downtown area. He also found that the rent for one specific location is \$7000 per month. He suggested that the Commission compile a list of ongoing updates of real estate vacancies. He believes this information would be useful for the Planning and Zoning Commission, Chamber of Commerce and Commission to know what is

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available when inquiries for space are made. Mr. Thomas commented that maintaining this information would be another project for an EDC staff person

Mr. McPherson noted that the Homeward Board store is going out of business. He also reported that the Food Works store in Guilford will be closing soon.

Mr. Ball noted that he has become aware from Representative Heinrich that there are some small economic development grants and job training programs available through the State. The Commission should also keep advised of any grants that might be available under the stimulus program for public works projects.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2010, 7:30 p.m. at the Madison Town Campus.

Terry Holland-Buckley  
Clerk

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