



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

Approved 5/13/10

Note: action items are underlined and owners of the action items are **bolded**.

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Madison Economic Development Commission held on Thursday, April 8, 2010, 7:30 p.m. at the Madison Town Campus.

Present: Commissioners Mark Casparino, Jim Ball, Anne Foley, Joan Walker, Hank Yaggi, III

Also present: Filmore McPherson, First Selectman; Marilyn Ozols, Planning Officer; Eileen Banisch, Chamber of Commerce; Tom Banisch, observer

Mr. Casparino called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

1. Minutes. March 11, 2010. On motion made by Ms. Walker, and seconded by Ms. Foley, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 11, 2010 as submitted.
2. Public Comment. There was no discussion under public forum.
3. Discussion of the 2010 Plan.
 - a. For the Citizens/Town
 - i. **Communication Plan Draft.** Mr. Casparino provided members with a draft list of ideas to consider communicating to the general public when appropriate. The Commission members discussed the ideas included on the list.

Mr. Casparino proposed communication on the upcoming budget and why a land use/economic development director is important to the Town now, as a priority item. It was noted that approximately \$40,000 is included in the EDC budget for a portion of this position and it is important for the public to understand that this position is critical for the Commission to be able to effectively move forward with its activities.

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Mr. Casparino questioned if the Commission should take appropriate independent action to encourage support for the budget. He noted that he had been in contact with the Chairman of the Board of Finance to determine if the Board needed any additional input and he was advised that no further information was necessary. Mr. McPherson commented that if the vote on the budget is unsuccessful, the Board of Finance will be looking for reductions and since this is an additional staff item, it could be a target. He commented that some members of the public are unhappy with the Griswold Property item but they need to understand that if the budget is not approved, the Griswold Property item will not be impacted.

Ms. Walker suggested that the EDC write a letter to the editor in the Source and Mr. McPherson agreed that a letter of support of the budget from the EDC would be appropriate.

On motion made by Mr. Ball, and seconded by Mr. Yaggi, the Commission voted unanimously to submit a letter from the Commission in support of the FY 2010-2011 budget with specific note that this budget includes funding for a new position of Director of Community Planning and Economic Development.

Ms. Walker agreed to draft a letter and circulate it to the Commission members for input and review by Monday, April 12 with members to respond by Thursday, April 15. Mr. Casparino will find out the deadline for the letter to be submitted in time to be published in the May 13th edition, just prior to the May 18 vote. Ms Banisch noted that typically, the letter would have to be submitted to the Source by the previous Thursday, or May 6 in order to be included in the May 13 edition.

Mr. Ball suggested that the Town Committees be asked for a resolution of support for the budget and Mr. McPherson agreed that this could also be appropriate and effective.

Other topics for future communications included on the list were:

- the EDC's purpose, objectives, and who we are,
- the handbook initiative,
- the shepherding initiative,
- Madison as a destination advertisement possibly along with Guilford,
- the Madison Center Project,
- the Bradley Road Vision Study which includes the waste water management study, and its incorporation into the Downtown Development Plan,
- standardized building regulations with Planning and Zoning

Mr. Yaggi recommended that the Commission focus some discussion and communication on an answer to the question, "Why Madison", with the idea of

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being able to explain why a business will flourish if they come to Madison. Mr. Casparino agreed that, once the budget issue is settled and the new staff is hired, working on a “Why Madison” would be an important communication item to help others learn about Madison. Ms. Banisch noted that the Chamber of Commerce has developed a list of items that explain why the quality of life is so good in Madison. She noted that when a business is considering relocating, they are concerned about where they and their employees will live so quality of life issues are very important in their decision making process. She agreed to send this list out the Commission members. Mr. Ball suggested that this list be formalized and included on the EDC web site. Ms. Banisch agreed to forward the Chamber of Commerce list to the EDC members.

Mr. Yaggi suggested that the Town look into the condition of some aspects of the Surf Club which is a great Madison asset that needs some effort to get it back in shape. Mr. Banisch advised, that as a member of the Beach and Recreation Commission, he is aware of the issue and that the Department is working on some improvements. He noted that they are also making some changes in the pass system and there will be stricter enforcement at the gate to have more control on this facility. Ms. Foley noted that the new food vendor is very good and people will see an improvement in this area.

In response to a question, Mr. McPherson noted that work on the inclusion of the short film on the web site is currently on hold. Mr. Casparino noted that Mr. Duques directed him to a video regarding Madison on the internet that is very effective in showing the qualities of the Town. Ms. Banisch noted that she has also seen the video and is looking at putting it on the Chamber of Commerce web site with a link to the town website, perhaps modifying the content of the video as required. Mr. McPherson noted that this was a good idea that may need to be evaluated just prior to inclusion on the town website.

Ms. Banisch noted that the Chamber of Commerce is developing a model logo to include the tag line “sea, shop and stay”.

- ii. **New Economic Development/Land Use Director status.** Mr. McPherson noted that they are close to finalizing the job description for the land use/economic development director position. Mr. Ball commented that the job description is very detailed and provides a good focus for the economic development aspects of the position.
- iii. **Bradley Road Vision Study** Mr. Casparino provided a handout on the downtown game plan with suggested next steps provided by David Kadamus. The items are listed by priority of either A, B, C or to be determined. He requested that members review the A priorities and, using 5 votes per member, vote on the issues

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they feel should be the top priorities. Once all members have completed their ranking, the top three items will become the focus of the Commission's efforts. He requested that members forward their votes to him within two weeks so that the results can be presented at the May meeting.

Ms. Banisch expressed concern for the proposal for the railroad station going back to wetland status which will have the effect of having a prime commercial parcel revert to marsh. Mr. McPherson noted that this is being proposed because if they leave the station in place, they will not be approved for the up and over station. If wetlands are destroyed there is a requirement that the area be traded with another wetlands. Following a suggestion, Mr. McPherson agreed to look into the possibility of trading this area for wetlands at another location.

Ms. Walker noted that there was a letter in The Source from a resident walking at Tuxis Pond noting that there is a problem with litter and vandalism. Mr. McPherson noted that the Police Department will be moving more into community policing so they will be more present in this area. Mr. McPherson also commented that they could look into removing the area on the boardwalk where youths tend to gather and sometimes throw trash into the pond. Mr. Banisch suggested that the Town look into a littering ordinance to help resolve the problem.

b. For the Property Owners

- i. **Planning and Development Handbook status.** Ms. Ozols noted that she is continuing work on Planning and Development handbook and that the document remains on-target for May 1 distribution to the Commission.
- ii. **Website status.** Ms. Foley noted that work on the website cannot more forward until the work on the Board of Education website is complete. Ms. Walker questioned if the Commission would have the option to use a consultant rather than Town staff for the web site design. Mr. Ball commented that he likes the idea of looking at options for other sources of web site design. Mr. Yaggi agreed to review websites from other towns for ideas noting that it is important that the EDC website be well done and sophisticated and give viewers an experience not just information. Mr. Casparino noted that there is approximately \$5000 available for the web site. Ms. Walker agreed to work with Ms. Foley and Mr. Yaggi on the web site and Mr. Banisch agreed to also assist. A report of progress from this team is expected at the May meeting.

c. For the merchants

- i. **Regionalization.** Mr. Ball noted that he had attended a Smart Growth Conference sponsored by 1000 Friends of Connecticut on March 18 in Hartford and presented

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by the Metropolitan District Commission. The conference was attended by approximately 250 people and he attended two break-out sessions. There was an emphasis at the conference on green technology. He commented that the concept of the seminar was very good for the state and was very well organized.

Mr. Yaggi suggested that, in moving forward with smart growth issues, cities and towns group together in common areas rather than statewide. Mr. McPherson suggested that the Council of Governments could be an effective way to work on smart growth issues at the local level and it would not be difficult to add another initiative to their agenda.

Mr. Ball noted that representative Joe Courtney is working on a project related to the import and export business and is planning a trip overseas. Mr. Ball suggested it could be beneficial to tap into any efforts in this area to determine if there are any opportunities for Madison. Mr. Ball noted that he has become aware of a county in Virginia that is actively encouraging businesses to move from Connecticut to Virginia so economic development efforts are very important. The Commission needs to continue to work to gain and build on the economic development activities that currently exist because if Madison doesn't take the initiative, other towns might. Mr. Ball commented that one area with potential is bio-diversity noting that the shoreline corridor from New Haven to Old Saybrook is a model area for bio technology and bio diversity.

- ii. **Madison Center Project status.** Mr. McPherson noted that CL&P will begin work possibly this week. Mr. Banisch noted that there will be a Madison Center Project meeting next Friday.
4. Update by Marilyn Ozols. Ms. Ozols noted that there has only been a small amount of economic development related Planning and Zoning activity. She noted that the Mercy Center has received approval for a remodeling project and the Public Works project was continued to April 15.

In response to a question by Ms. Walker, Mr. McPherson noted that the time frame for the completion of the Senior Center project is approximately one year.

In response to a question by Ms. Walker regarding outdoor restaurant seating, Ms. Ozols recommended that a number of EDC members attend the May 6 Planning Meeting to discuss this item. Mr. Casparino requested that Ms. Ozols put the EDC on the agenda for this meeting and he will follow up to determine which member(s) can attend.

5. Old business. There were no items discussed under old business.

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6. New business. Ms. Banisch suggested that Madison hold a economic development forum similar to the event recently held in Guilford. The forum could be a joint effort of the EDC and Chamber of Commerce with the First Selectman in attendance to meet with town business representatives for a question and answer forum. This event could provide an opportunity to provide updates on activities like the Bradley Road Vision Study and Madison Center Project. The Chamber holds a voting meeting in May and it would be beneficial to offer a special event like a forum to draw people to attend. She suggested that a breakfast meeting would encourage the best attendance.

Mr. McPherson agreed it is important for the EDC to take a lead role in economic development issues and a forum could be an effective event. Mr. Casparino and Ms. Banisch agreed to discuss the idea of a forum further and discuss ways the Commission could take a leading role in organizing this event.

Mr. Casparino thanked both the guests as well as the commission members present at the meeting for their valuable input.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2010, 7:30 p.m. at the Madison Town Campus.

Terry Holland-Buckley
Clerk

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