



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

Approved February 12, 2009

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Madison Economic Development Commission held on Thursday, November 13, 2008, at 7:30 p.m. Madison Town Campus.

Present: Commissioners Peter Thomas, Jim Ball, Ryan Duques, Peggy Lyons, Edwin Moore, Jim Satterwhite

Also present: Al Goldberg, First Selectman, Christine Poutot, Ron Clark, Terry Macy, Planning and Zoning Commission; Marilyn Ozols, Planning and Zoning Office; Tom Baish, Chamber of Commerce; Kimberly Whitaker, Connecticut Main Street, Keith Mirante, Coastal Chiropractic and Wellness, 6 members of the public

Peter Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

3. **Presentation by Connecticut Main Street Center.** Kim Whitaker, Associate Director, was present to review the activities of Connecticut Main Street. She noted that they have an office in Hartford and work with 40 Connecticut communities in various ways. She is pleased to have been invited to give this presentation to the Town of Madison as they look at options for the Madison downtown district.

Ms. Whitaker provided an overview of how Main Street works and the services that they provide. She reviewed the historical forces that have changed the character of downtown districts noting that the primary change occurred with the construction of the highway system after World War II. As people moved out of the cities, retail followed and changes occurred in the physical environment of the cities. Ms. Whitaker noted that the Main Street program strives to assist with economic and community development within the context of historic preservation. Ms. Whitaker reviewed the development of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the 1970s.

Ms. Whitaker reviewed Main Street's four point approach which strives to develop programs to restore civic, physical, social and economic value in downtown areas. She reviewed the eight principals of the Main Street Program which include a comprehensive approach, reliance on quality, the use of public/private partnerships, inclusion of changing attitudes, a focus on existing assets, encouragement of self help programs, the inclusion of nature and programs that are implementation oriented. One of the

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key issues for their management program for commercial districts to succeed is a strong Public/Private Partnership. Ms. Whitaker noted that the Main Street program begins with quality of life issues to help provide a clean, safe, friendly environment. She provided examples of activities that have occurred under the Main Street program in Waterbury and Hartford.

Ms. Whitaker noted that the Main Street program in Connecticut was founded by CL&P. She showed a map of the designated Main Street communities in the United States and in the State of Connecticut.

Ms. Whitaker reviewed the Main Street Mission Statement which is to help build economically vibrant, traditional main streets and healthier communities by providing training to its network of public/private partnerships. They hold quarterly workshops and advocacy and outreach programs to enhance downtown friendly policies and develop resources to revitalize downtown areas. Their guiding principal is to align the Connecticut Main Street network in support of like minded organizations and public policy.

Ms. Whitaker noted that the Main Street Program supports a mixed use advocacy program which encourages responsible growth with a focus on mixed use/mixed issue development. Areas they focus on include affordable housing, historic rehabilitation and tax credits. She noted that they offer a Preservation Place grant program to member communities.

Ms. Whitaker reviewed the responsibilities of the Main Street Board of Directors including stewardship, governance, advocacy, outreach, fund development and executive director responsibilities. Assistance to member communities begins with start up assistance and then they move into growth share. She noted that \$597 million has been invested in Connecticut Main Street communities creating 379 new businesses and netting 2329 new jobs. For additional information, Ms. Whitaker encouraged EDC members to go to www.ctmainstreet.org.

Jim Ball questioned if Main Street was working with people involved in smart growth. Ms. Whitaker noted that they are working with appropriate organizations involved in smart growth.

Peter Thomas questioned the process and time line for a community to become involved with Main Street. Ms. Whitaker noted that to become a recognized community requires membership and the membership fee for Madison would be \$750. She further noted that funding for designated programs is generally provided as 1/3 from the Town operating budget, 1/3 from grants and 1/3 from the community.

David Kadamus questioned if the Main Street program has any experience with communities that have had to deal with reclamation of a natural resource like Tuxis Pond in Madison. Ms. Whitaker noted that they have work with communities with natural resources such as rivers and waterfronts. She noted that strategies for reclamation generally take longer. She agreed to research if there are other Main Street communities with a situation similar to Madison.

- 1. Public Comments.** Peter Thomas requested input from those present at the meeting on ideas for possibly moving forward with the Main Street Program.

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Christine Poutot commented that it appears the Main Street Program could open up opportunities by assisting with coordination efforts. She noted that the Town Beautification Committee is about to begin to implement Stage 1 of the project. Residents will begin to see some power lines come down, changes in street signs and new sidewalks. They are working on the implementation of the schedule and will be holding an informational meeting in January.

Peter Thomas commented that it will be important to moving forward with an economic development symposium in February to bring all of the different groups together with speakers and to provide an opportunity to exchange ideas. He noted that the sub-committee of PZC is a good way to begin coordination.

Al Goldberg commented that he believes any coordination efforts are a step in the right direction. He commented that the membership fee for Main Street is relatively low and it appears to be beneficial. When it gets to the stage where 1/3 of the cost for projects needs to come from the community it will be important to get businesses involved. Peter Thomas noted that the EDC has already voted to consider membership in Connecticut Main Street from the EDC budget.

Marilyn Ozols commented that one important step involves providing for a staff person for economic development efforts. She believes it is time to pull all interested people together for an exchange of ideas. She believes there is value to joining Connecticut Main Street.

Peter Thomas commented that he believes the discussion this evening is a good start to the exchange of information. Efforts to increase the grand list without affecting quality of life issues are becoming more and more important.

Mr. Clark commented that he supports the Bradley Road Vision Study. He feels, however, that it is also important to focus on immediate issues like some of the recent controversial projects that have been submitted. In some of these instances, businesses have become frustrated and abandoned their projects. He would like to see the EDC put more effort into these types of current economic development projects in addition to their efforts to look at the long range picture.

Peter Thomas reviewed projects that the EDC has become involved with noting that New Road, East Gate, West Gate and the traffic circle are all issues that have been discussed.

Ryan Duques commented that while he agrees that long term initiatives are important, he also understands Mr. Clark's concerns and agrees that the EDC needs to focus on the more immediate needs and current projects in addition to long range goals.

Jim Ball commented that the EDC needs to be provided with a justification and vehicle to look at current projects.

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David Kadamus commented that he believes this is a shifting time. In the past seven years there have been important projects reviewed by the EDC and this task is becoming more difficult without staff support. He believes that one of the biggest values in Madison is the downtown area and the EDC should continue to work to evolve this area in a desirable fashion. He believes that two primary issues to focus on include physical infrastructure and the perception that it is difficult to implement change in Madison. There is a perception that other surrounding Towns are friendlier to business than Madison so recruitment can be difficult. Wastewater management is the number one issue that needs to be addressed. He commented that Connecticut Main Street could be the advocacy group needed to move things forward.

Christine Poutot commented that she agrees it would be helpful to have an EDC staff person to help businesses through the requests and regulations. Sometimes it is difficult for businesses to figure out the system on their own. She suggested that businesses interested in moving to Madison be encouraged to go to the Planning and Zoning Commission early in the process.

Peter Thomas commented that he believes the Town has an opportunity to change the perception as a business unfriendly community. There is currently 40,000 SF of space available and when interest is expressed in this space the Town needs to make the process as reasonable as possible and be welcoming to businesses who want to come to Madison. The goal should be to bring business to Town not to keep them out. The February symposium can serve as a useful tool. Christine Poutot recommended that the Commission consider holding the symposium on a week night rather than a morning to allow for higher participation.

Ryan Duques noted that the Chamber of Commerce has discussed ways to make their web site available for these types of issues to list available properties and to discuss business issues.

Christine Poutot commented that she believes the super block and septic system issues are the largest issues in the Bradley Road Vision project and she questioned their status. Peter Thomas noted that there will be a need for an advocacy person to help move these issues forward. David Kadamus agreed that there is a need for an advocacy group to be involved and suggested that this advocacy group could be Connecticut Main Street. There is also a need to get more businesses involved in these issues. He noted that the bottom line of these efforts is Madison's long term tax rate since 100% residential taxes is not sustainable for Madison's quality of life.

2. **Approval of Minutes** On a motion made by Jim Ball, and seconded by Peter Thomas, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 9, 2008 as submitted.

4. **Downtown Development Vision Study**. There was no report on Downtown Development Vision Study.

6. **Executive Session**. There was discussion under executive session.

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On a motion made by Jim Ball, and seconded by Peggy Lyons, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:00 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled Madison Economic Development Commission meeting will be December 12, 2008, 7:30 p.m. at the Madison Town Campus.

Terry Holland-Buckley
Clerk

Edwin Moore
James Satterwhite
Ryan Duques
Jim Ball

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Peter Thomas – Vice Chair
Peggy Lyons – Secretary