



# Town of Madison, CT

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## Economic Development Commission

Draft

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on August 13, 2020 via Zoom Videoconferencing

Present: Commissioners Ryan Duques, Matt Bloom, Eric Dillner, Anne Foley, Lisa Miksis, Mark Steffen,

Also present: Dave Anderson, Town Planner; Justin Murphy, Board of Finance Liaison

Mr. Duques called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes of regular meeting, July 9, 2020. On motion made by Mr. Bloom and seconded by Ms. Miksis, the Commission voted to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of July 9, 2020 as submitted.
2. Public comment. There was no discussion under public comment.
3. Waste Water Update. Mr. Duques noted that he and Mr. Steffen had talked about the waste water issue but are not prepared for a report this evening.
4. Update: Tax Policy Presented to BOS. Mr. Duques noted that the Board of Selectmen had been provided with a copy of the Tax Incentive Policy with the updates recommended by the Economic Development Commission. He had attended the Board of Selectmen's meeting when this item presented and with a recommendation for action, to explain that the purpose of the change is to better align it with the Economic Development policies and to add guidelines for potential users. The goal was for the Board of Selectmen to adopt the policy but they indicated that they were not ready to act. Since no action was taken, the current policy will remain in place at this time. Mr. Duques noted that the delay will not have much of an impact now since any applications under the policy would need to be approved by Town Meeting and right now there is no mechanism in place to hold a Town Meeting.

Mr. Duques also noted that he had provided the members of the Board of Selectmen with a copy of the EDC Action Plan and invited them to attend an EDC meeting to ask questions and provide comments.

In response to a question by Mr. Duques, Mr. Foley agreed to contact First Selectwoman Lyons to see if she can provide additional information that could assist the Selectmen in taking action on this item. Mr. Duques agreed to forward a copy of the updated policy to Mrs. Foley for her to have available for her conversation with Selectwoman Lyons.

2-Minutes of a meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on August 13, 2020

In response to a question, Mr. Duques clarified that Town Meeting is not needed to approve the Tax Incentive Policy but is required to approve any applications submitted under the policy.

In response to a question by Mr. Murphy, Mr. Duques noted that he had attended the Board of Selectmen's regular meeting in July. He is uncertain about the exact reason they did not act on this item at this meeting but it might have had something to do with the wording on the agenda not specifying that action will be taken.

5. Board Reports (BOS, BOF, Planning and Zoning)

**Board of Selectmen's Report** – Mr. Duques noted that Mr. Wilson was not able to attend the meeting so there is no Board of Selectmen's report.

**Board of Finance Report** – Mr. Murphy noted that the Board of Finance did not meet in July but they will be meeting in August. He noted that there are many areas of the budget that have had increased costs due to the pandemic and also possibly due the recent storm. There are other areas that have lower costs due to the shut-down of buildings like the Senior Center being closed and some employees being furloughed. The Board of Education is also seeing additional costs in some area and savings in other areas. The overall impact on the budget is not known at this time.

The Town offices are working hard to track all pandemic and storm related expenses for possible reimbursement from the State or Federal government.

Mr. Murphy noted that he will be happy to highlight any issues of interest to the EDC at the Board of Finance meeting.

In response to a question by Mr. Anderson, Mr. Murphy noted that there will most likely be an increased focus on projects under the CIP for possible reevaluation or postponement given the uncertain economic environment due to the pandemic.

**Planning and Zoning Report-** Mr. Anderson highlighted the following activities for an update on Planning and Zoning activity:

- An application was received for the former Guilford Savings Bank building at 634 Boston Post Road. Chase Bank has submitted a design to ACCA and was directed to make changes which have since been approved. They are scheduled to go the PZC for a site plan review which he expects to be approved.
- Mr. Anderson and Mr. Murphy have worked together to find a consultant to conduct a Facilities Assessment to develop a Master Plan for Town facilities. The stud will include a conditions assessment including an ADA component. They will also consider emergency shelter options. On August 24th a recommendation for a consultant will be submitted to the Board of Selectmen. The timeline for the completion of the report is 75 days. The consultant

### 3-Minutes of a meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on August 13, 2020

could also be asked to conduct a second phase of the Strategic Plan. Mr. Duques agreed to send members a copy of the data analysis of facilities that had been put together by the Commission.

- Mr. Anderson noted that the recently completed project at 41 Cottage Road included five apartment units. This project, which was facilitated by a PZC regulation change, is completed and the units are rented out.

Ms. Foley asked if Mr. Anderson is aware of any businesses that did not survive the Covid crisis. She specifically asked about the status of the movie theatre. Mr. Anderson noted that the owner of the theatre will be making some decisions about the future of the theatre which has been impacted by changes in the movie industry as well as the Covid crisis.

#### 6. Old business.

##### A. **Semi-Annual Review of Action Plan.**

Mr. Duques provided background information on the development of the Economic Development Commission Action Plan from May, 2019. This plan was developed with input from Town Government, the Chamber of Commerce, property and businesses owners and focus groups.

Mr. Duques reviewed the key elements of the Plan that the EDC should consider, follow or take action on include:

- The importance of considering the benefit of specific skills when recommending a member for the EDC.
- Visit existing businesses to understand their needs and advocate for them.
- Receive feedback from local businesses on their parking needs
- Future septic needs of businesses should be communicated to Town leaders
- Longer retail hours on weeknights and Sundays should be encouraged
- Assist with marketing within town and outside of town.
- Support business by providing support, conducting visits, helping entrepreneurs, highlighting strong industries, providing information on State and Federal resources and promoting Tax Abatement policies
- Consideration should be given to future needs including a Plan of Conservation and Development, issues related to the aging population, education, transportation, utility capacity, and grand list growth
- Work with PZC together on common goals including the land use process
- Partner with the Chamber of Commerce on common goals
- Work with surrounding towns on tourism and business attraction efforts
- Work with the Board of Education to promote and excellent school system to draw young families to the area
- Promote investment in infrastructure, encourage tax incentives and work on long term planning efforts
- Promote different types of housing density in appropriate parts of town

#### 4-Minutes of a meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on August 13, 2020

- Participate in long range planning efforts, promote environmental assets and explore grant opportunities

Mr. Duques noted that this plan was pre-Covid and he suggested that Commission members review the plan and e-mail any comments they might have over the next couple weeks for the Commission to discuss and consider any possible changes. There will be further discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Dillner commented that he believes the plan is missing a summary statement about what the Town and Commission want to be as a community. He believes this ties into the discussion about concerns about the movie theatre surviving in the town as an arts center that attracts people to town.

Ms. Miksis agreed that the movie theatre is a vital part of the arts in the community and suggested there be discussion about ways to assist this business through this difficult time. She asked if the owner had information available on where people come from to be able to potentially identify the impact this business has on drawing people to the downtown area where they go to a movie and most likely support other businesses. Mr. Anderson agreed to contact the owner to see if he has data that he can share.

Mr. Bloom suggested the promotion of outdoor movie events in conjunction with the Madison Theatre to provide some business opportunities.

Mr. Duques commented that the Commission should consider adding the promotion of arts and culture in Town to the plan when it is updated.

Ms. Foley noted that outdoor seating at restaurants has become popular and she questioned if there is any action that can be taken to help restaurants continue to provide outdoor seating even after the pandemic is over. Mr. Anderson noted that, in most situations, the only thing preventing outdoor seating is septic limitations. He noted that restaurants can always consider swapping some indoor seating in exchange for outdoor seating.

Mr. Anderson noted that with the additional demand for take-out food a problem with adequate waste removal has developed. Beach and Recreation is aware of the problem and have made efforts to address this issue. Moving forward there should be discussion on a comprehensive plan for trash removal in the downtown area. He also noted that information the STEAP grants was received and this year, at \$128,000, the amount is smaller than in the past. He suggested that consideration be given to putting together a "wish list" of items that would be projects that would improve either the downtown area specifically or the Town in general. This list would then be provided to the CIP for consideration as opportunities arise. The EDC could begin the process of developing the list with a discussion at a future meeting. Mr. Bloom suggested that the completion of the second platform at the train station be an important item to include on this list.

5-Minutes of a meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on August 13, 2020

7. New business. Mr. Steffen advised of recent legislation passed in Connecticut regarding the establishment of Municipal Re-Development Authorities. Under this program municipalities can partner together to reach the population level of 70,000 required to form an authority. He will look into the possibility of utilizing the program to work with neighboring towns to deal with the waste water issue.

Dr. Duques noted that, with the recent retirement of the Guilford Economic Development Coordinator, he suggested that there be a discussion with Guilford on areas where the two towns could cooperate on EDC efforts.

8. Adjournment. On motion made by Mr. Steffen, and seconded by Ms. Foley, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Terry Holland-Buckley  
Clerk