



Town of Madison, CT

Economic Development Commission

Subject to Approval

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission held on November 22, 2022, 7:00 p.m. at the Madison Town Campus

Present: Commissioners Jonathan Stein, Matt Bloom, Ryan Duques, Gregg Wagner, Andrew Wood; Michelle Call, Executive Director, Chamber of Commerce

Dr. Stein called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1 Approval of minutes of regular meeting October 13, 2022. On motion made by Mr. Wood, and seconded by Ms. Miksis, the Commission voted to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of June 9, 2022 as corrected.

CORRECTIONS:

Page 4, Item 7b, last paragraph, first line, typing error in spelling of name Ms. Cote”

Page 5, Item 8, second paragraph last line should refer to “Chamber’s Executive Director” rather than “President”

Page 5, Item 10, under Marijuana Legalization Committee, should refer to “Selectman Wilson” rather than “First Selectman”

2. Public comment. There were no public comments.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Chamber of Commerce Update.

Ms. Call highlighted recent Chamber of Commerce activities as follows:

- In November the Chamber launched its new website hosted by Chamber Nations, which designs specifically for Chambers of Commerce
- A shredding event was held on October
- The Trunk Or Treat event was held on the Green. The numbers were lower than last year most likely due to the fact that the event was not held on a weekend day this year
- A Chamber of Commerce event was held on November 15th, that served as a great networking opportunity for local businesses
- The Chamber coordinated the installation of 18 wreaths on Main Street. The cost of the wreaths is up 63% and this cost had to be passed on to the sponsors who still

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participated. Ms. Call noted that Ms. Cote did a great job with decorations on Wall Street. She feels that all of the downtown decorating helps to bring visitors to Madison

- The Chamber sponsored a small business tour today
- Small Business Saturday will be held this Saturday and will include fun family activities and adult activities including A Ladies Night and an alcohol infused shopping day

Ms. Call noted that in January and February they take a break from special activities. In March they will be sponsoring a Super Bowl event and Chile and Chowder competition. They will also be hosting a day long Business Conference and Expo at the Madison Beach Hotel, which will include a Chamber Connect Event, break-out sessions and Business With A Twist with a box lunch. Individuals can sign up for a full or half day of participation.

Dr. Stein recommended that the Chamber sponsor a Chamber/Town/EDC Breakfast event, like last year, in May, 2023. This event is very helpful for businesses and Town staff and the EDC members to get to know each other.

Mr. Wagner introduced himself as a new EDC member. He noted that he was born and raised in Connecticut but he also moved around to other States. His daughter is in the Madison school system. He is in the real estate business in the development side. He feels that Madison has done a lot for his family and he would like to give back to the community by serving on the EDC.

OLD BUSINESS

4. Academy Advisory Committee Representative

Dr. Stein noted that the EDC still needs to assign a member to serve as the EDC representative to the Academy Advisory Committee. Mr. Wagner agreed to serve in this capacity.

4.a Other New Business.

Ms. Cote noted that the Business and Retention Expansion Plan is currently on hold. She will begin to set up visits to local businesses after the new year. These visits are helpful in introducing the EDC to local businesses. She has developed a list of questions to reference when meeting with businesses as a way to check in with businesses to let them know the Town and its representatives are supportive of local business and want to help insure business retention. She agreed to forward the list of questions to Mr. Wagner for his review and comment.

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NEW BUSINESS

8. Strategic Plan Update.

Dr. Stein noted that a meeting is being scheduled for December 15th at 3:00 regarding the Strategic Plan Update. Ms. Cote noted that the plan has an economic development component so the EDC will be the only Commission with a representative on this Committee. The Finance Director and Emergency Services staff will represent other Town Departments, Boards and Commissions.

7. Signage Program

Ms. Cote noted that she and the Town Planner are working together to create a vision for the number and locations for 10 welcome to Madison signs. They are narrowing down locations at the exit ramps and points of entry into Madison from neighboring Towns. The ARPA Committee has approved \$67,000 in funds for this project. An RFP has been drafted to obtain proposals from sign makers.

6. Grant Program.

Ms. Cote noted that ARPA has provided \$30,000 for up to \$2,500 each for façade improvement grants for businesses to beautify their businesses. This would be a reimbursement program with business to fund their work and then be reimbursed with the grant funds. A similar program in Guilford generated 12 applications for up to \$1,000 grants. In Guilford the applications were reviewed by a committee on a rolling basis with no specific deadline. She would recommend setting a deadline for applications and that the applications be reviewed either by a Committee or the full Commission.

Ms. Cote noted that the ARPA Committee has set a deadline of October 1st for expenditure of the awarded funds. One issue that could impact the timeline is the possible difficulty in finding a contractor to do proposed work. To work toward the proposed deadline, she would recommend that the program launch on January 1st with an early spring deadline for applications .

In discussion, the Commission members agreed that the applications should be reviewed by the full Commission and there should be two rounds of applications with deadlines of March 1st and April 1st.

5. Waste Water Study.

Ms. Cote noted that EDC members had been provided with a copy of the agreement for engineering services between Madison and Weston & Sampson Engineers for a Downtown

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Wastewater Needs Assessment. The scope includes a review of existing information, a survey of the property owners, a build-out evaluation, the development of conceptual alternatives and delivery of the report. The cost proposal is \$138,200 in Connecticut eligible funds and \$25,500 in non-eligible costs. The project will focus on the downtown area to identify wastewater issues that limit businesses and growth in the downtown area and how to possibly correct any identified issues.

In response to a question, Mr. Duques provided background information on the wastewater issue in Madison. He noted that the WPCA was established many years ago with a goal of understanding the wastewater landscape with a focus on the residential perspective. Years ago, there was a focus on sewer avoidance as a way to slow down or limit growth in Town.

Mr. Duques noted that a discussion with a focus on the downtown area has been led by the EDC for a number of years now. Many years ago, funds were appropriated for a feasibility study to look into what could be done to assist businesses with waste water issues. This new study could be helpful as it focuses on what issues exists now and help determine if there is extra septic capacity in the downtown area and how an extra or new capacity could be utilized to assist with business expansion. This is the first step with the follow-up to be the development of a new engineering plan. The assessment could have the effect of creating interest from local businesses in support of efforts for increased wastewater capacity for downtown buildings. Businesses with relatively new septic systems might not demonstrate a great interest but the study should be able to identify businesses and property owners who could benefit from increased capacity. It will be important that the scope make it clear that the study needs to identify the capacity and system age of each existing parcel utilizing a spread sheet. It would also be helpful if the data would demonstrate any businesses that could benefit if a larger community system could be provided.

Ms. Call noted that wastewater capacity is a primary issue that impacts what business activity can occur at a specific property. Restaurant businesses are particularly impacted by septic capacity. If a property has apartments on the second floor which utilize system capacity, this will limit what can be done on the first floor. She noted that installation and/or expansion of septic systems are very expensive and potentially disruptive to businesses. One recent change that assisted businesses is the State increasing sewage capacity from 5,000 gallons to 7,500 gallons to be a locally covered system rather than being under DEEP jurisdiction.

Ms. Cote noted that she will contact Mr. Duques for further assistance and then talk to the representative from Weston & Sampson about the input provided by the EDC to ensure that the information the Commission feels will be beneficial is provided by the study.

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5a Other business.

Mr. Woods noted that the Commission had discussed the train station expansion at the October meeting and the minutes noted that further discussion would occur after the election which as held earlier this month. Dr. Stein recommended that discussion on the train station expansion take place at the December meeting when First Selectwoman Lyons can be present.

Mr. Duques advised that on May 24, 2021 there was a meeting with the Town and a number of DOT representatives were there for an extensive discussion on the various issues regarding the expansion of the train station in Madison. He suggested that an effort be made to identify those present and recreate this meeting for an update on the issues and whether any items have changed since the initial 2021 meeting. Dr. Stein suggested that Christine Cohen and John Michael Parker also be involved in any meetings or discussions.

Ms. Call noted that she had overheard at the meeting when DOT representatives were present, that DOT had planning money available for the Madison train station.

Mr. Duques noted that the Commission had discussed the idea of moving the bus stop for 9 Town Transit to the train station to create a transportation hub and he suggested that discussion on this idea continue. Ms. Cote agreed to discuss this idea with representatives from 9-Town Transit.

9. Adjournment.

On motion made by Mr. Bloom, and seconded by Mr. Duques, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Holland-Buckley