

**Town of East Hampton
Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 16, 2017
East Hampton High School T-Bell**

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Jack Solomon, Tim Csere, Kate Adams (6:37), Ted Turner, Jim Monahan, and Town Manager Mike Maniscalco

Absent: Erin Hall

Call to order: Chairman Solomon called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

- a) *A motion was made by Mr. Csere and seconded by Mr. Monahan to approve the regular meeting minutes of April 18, 2017. Voted 4-0.*

Public Comments: None

Presentation: Jeff Pugliese of the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Pugliese, Vice President of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC) gave a presentation extolling the benefits of joining the Chamber. Portland and East Hampton are together in a division of the Chamber. MCCC is the largest free standing Chamber in CT with over 2,200 member firms. Further information can be found at www.middlesexchamber.com.

Mr. Pugliese also discussed the Middlesex County Revitalization Commission (MCRC), which is a lending partner of the State of CT that gives loans and grants for local businesses to create and retain full time jobs. The business does not have to belong to the Chamber to qualify. The loans range from \$10,000 – \$300,000.

In addition to discussing the programs above, Mr. Pugliese stated that he can share a list of East Hampton businesses that belong to the Chamber with the Commission, and that the MCCC will help promote the networking event at the Bevin House on August 23. Mr. Maniscalco asked about the Chamber's position on diversification of taxation. Mr. Pugliese stated the Chamber does not have a formalized position, but that the Chamber always wants to do what is best for businesses and is generally in favor of simplifying taxation.

Old Business

New Business Update: None

Belltown Spotlight on Business

Mr. Turner had a request from Loco Perro that they become a Spotlitged Business of the month, especially as this year is their 25th Anniversary. Paul's &

Sandy's Too will be the next spotlighted business, followed by Skincare Spa of East Hampton as previously voted on

A motion was made by Mr. Turner and seconded by Ms. Adams to nominate Abbeez as the Belltown Spotlight on Business recipient for July. Voted 5-0 in favor.

A motion was made by Ms. Adams and seconded by Mr. Csere to nominate American Distilling as the Belltown Spotlight on Business recipient for August. Voted 5-0 in favor.

Ms. Adams will communicate with Abbeez and Mr. Turner will communicate with American Distilling. Current list of nominated businesses: Sports on 66, Liberty Bank, Bevin House, Loco Perro.

Present and Future Status of Village Center

The Village Center (VC) status was discussed, along with Mr. Monahan's wish to create a collaborative focus group to talk about the issues and solutions of doing business and living in the VC. Mr. Monahan also inquired about how information gets shared amongst the many committees in town as he has noticed that some groups have shared interests. There was discussion on the monthly report that is received by the Town Council which will be shared with the EDC.

Mr. Monahan moved and Mr. Turner seconded to create a focus group for Village Center issues combining representatives from the EDC, the Brownfields Redevelopment Agency, Planning & Zoning Commission and business and residential owners in the Center. The purpose is to discuss problems and come up with planning documents. Voted 4 -1 with Mr. Csere voting against.

Discussion: Mr. Monahan asked Mr. Maniscalco if anything like this exists and if the Town Council has a liaison for the VC. Mr. Maniscalco stated that there is a similar group that takes part in a monthly lake meeting to coordinate activities; the Town Council does have liaisons to commissions and committees but not one specifically for the VC. Councilor Josh Piteo was present and discussed his enthusiasm for aiding the VC. Mr. Csere also stated at this time that the Water Task Force is recommending Tighe & Bond to the Council to do a study on water in the VC. It was noted that Mr. Monahan will take the lead on contacting the other groups.

Mr. Monahan discussed the need for an accurate, reliable and available database of East Hampton businesses. Possibilities of a business grant from a local business to create this, or utilizing the help of a student were raised. Ellen Paul, Library Director, stated that there is precedent for the library to carry this type of database. This will be discussed further in June.

New Business

Library Director Ellen Paul was present to discuss Small Business September, which will consist of library programming on starting a small business. The library will partner with the MCCC and Greater Hartford Score for a series of 5

programs. It was discussed that out of town businesses may be interested in coming as well.

Mr. Csere moved and Ms. Adams seconded to support the library's efforts in business education in any way the EDC can. Voted 5-0.

Discussion: Ms. Paul asked for direction and support and promotion at the Bevin House event. Mr. Turner suggested a section set up in the library that includes information on the sessions and other resources for small businesses.

Mr. Turner suggested that an EDC member go out and speak with one business a month and report back to the Commission any findings, as this would contribute to the meeting and the EDC will gain knowledge on the local businesses. Mr. Maniscalco suggested telling the story of that business. This item will be a recurring agenda item. It was also discussed that the Belltown Spotlight on Business recipient could be the subject of these reports.

Town Manager's Report:

Discussion of Tax Increment Finance Districts

Mr. Maniscalco handed out information and explained the idea of tax increment financing (TIF) in the VC. After plans are fully developed, this would need to pass through P&Z and then be established through an ordinance of the Town Council. When a TIF district is established, properties within its borders are assessed. When the next assessment occurs, the difference between the two becomes the "increment". The increment is then placed into funds to be used within the district. Mr. Maniscalco mentioned possibly having three buckets; façade revolving loan grant program, infrastructure improvements and a third for streetscape improvements. Details on this program, along with the current desolate state of the VC were discussed. Mr. Maniscalco is working with Jeremy DeCarli, Planning & Zoning Official and the Town's Attorney now to put documents together. He will bring it before the EDC first for approval, recommendation and support.

250th Anniversary Proposed Village Center Clock

\$4,922 has been raised so far toward the clock. Another \$17,000 is needed. Councilor Piteo stated that a possible commercial or civic sponsor would be able to help. There is now enough money for a deposit. The location is still open for debate. The EDC will share information on this to their Facebook page.

Other

Mr. Maniscalco stated that P&Z is considering a zone change for the corner of Main and Route 66 to Professional or Residential (POR). This would allow for professional offices such as a Doctor, CPA, lawyer, etc. in homes to keep the integrity of the neighborhood.

The Christopher Brook project is nearing completion; the binder coat is down and it will be paved soon. The stone façade and plaque needs to be put up; a ribbon cutting will occur the Saturday before Father's Day.

The State will be paving a portion of Route 16 this summer.

State funding was discussed. The Town budget is made up of 20% State revenue, so this year's cuts/budgeting situation could have a significant impact on East Hampton.

Public Comments

Josh Piteo, Town Councilor, stated that the TIF District could solve a lot of problems in the VC, and that he thinks the population will understand how it works. The VC is the worst he's seen it in 25 years and he would like to look to other river towns such as Deep River, Essex, Chester, as examples of what the VC could become. Those towns have water, the coordinated efforts of the merchants and municipal government and merchants with unique products. He looks forward to discussing the TIF district with the Town Council.

Walt Jedziniak, of Walt Jedziniak Photography, stated that his studio has partnered with Red Door Boutique to host a modeling contest, in part because both merchants were looking to recruit the same population as customers. He hopes that their partnership sets a standard for other business partnerships in town. (It was noted that the EDC will share this on their Facebook page).

Adjournment: *Chairman Solomon adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m..*

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza LoPresti
Recording Clerk