



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK Economic Development Commission

302 Main Street • Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475
Telephone (860) 395-3139 • FAX (860) 395-3125

Matthew Pugliese, Chair
Carol Conklin, Vice Chair
John DeCristoforo, Secretary/Treasurer

David Cole
Judy Ganswindt
Sandra Roberts
Elizabeth Swenson
Joseph Arcari, Alternate
David Prendergast, Alternate

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

January 21, 2020

Video conference

7:00 pm

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair, Matt Pugliese, called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Meeting held via Zoom video conference.

Members present: Matthew Pugliese, David Cole, David Prendergast, Sandra Roberts, Elizabeth Swenson (joined at 7:09pm), Carol Conklin (joined at 7:14pm)

Members absent: John DeCristoforo, Joseph Arcari, Judy Ganswindt

Staff: Susie Beckman, Economic Development Director

The Chair made a motion to strike "Guest" from the agenda. Police Chief Michael Spera was to be the guest, however, Chief Spera notified the Chair on evening of January 20 that he would be unable to attend due to a conflict with the Covid-19 Vaccination Clinic at the same time as the EDC meeting.

MOTION to strike "Guest" from the agenda; **MADE** by M. Pugliese; **SECONDED** by D. Prendergast; **VOTED IN FAVOR:** M. Pugliese, C. Conklin, D. Cole, S. Roberts, E. Swenson, and D. Prendergast; **OPPOSED:** none; **ABSTAINED:** none; **APPROVED:** 6-0-0.

III. PUBLIC QUESTION & COMMENT - None

IV. GUESTS - None

V. STAFF REPORT

Economic Development Director Susie Beckman asked for questions about the report that had been distributed prior to the meeting. The Chair asked about the results of the Holiday Geofencing Marketing Campaign. S. Beckman reviewed the data. Overall the results were very good with each business partner receiving over 100 potential customers sent directly to their websites. S. Beckman is still waiting for feedback from the participating businesses. The Chair noted that the marketing budget should be reviewed and the marketing plan revised as needed at the February meeting.

E. Swenson suggested attending a webinar about community engagement being presented at the end of the month and will share the link with Commissioners. The organization presenting the webinar has unconventional and creative strategies for engaging the public.

The Chair asked S. Beckman to report on the Connecticut Connectivity Grant Program (CCGP). Old Saybrook was one of 10 communities awarded a CCGP grant to construct complete sidewalks along the north side of Route 1 from Elm Street to the property where Dunkin Donuts is located. The grant is for \$596,000.



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VI. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Approval of Minutes: December 10, 2020

MOTION to approve the Meeting Minutes of December 10, 2020; **MADE** by D. Prendergast; **SECONDED** by D. Cole; **VOTED IN FAVOR:** M. Pugliese, C. Conklin, D. Cole, S. Roberts, E. Swenson, and D. Prendergast; **OPPOSED:** none; **ABSTAINED:** none; **APPROVED:** 6-0-0.

B. Correspondence & Announcements

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) sent an invitation to Economic Development Commissioners to attend the virtual presentations of the Design Excellence Awards on February 8 at 7pm. RSVP by Feb 1. S. Beckman will resend the invitation.

S. Beckman reminded Commissioners that officer elections were coming up. E. Swenson and D. Cole will talk with Commissioners to identify potential candidates.

S. Beckman responded to a question about the bench program. The program would be ended because all the bench replacement locations have been filled.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Small Business & Employment Recovery Update

The Chair provided the update:

- A local Public Health professional presented information and offered assistance to local businesses.
- Old Saybrook C.A.R.E.S. is still providing grants to households negatively impacted by the pandemic. The organization wants to get the word out to local businesses that any of their employees who live in Old Saybrook who are struggling financially are eligible to apply for assistance grants.
- PPP has been expanded into a second round and EIDL has been extended to the end of 2021. Businesses may need additional information to feel comfortable applying for these programs. Changes to the programs have made them less complicated and more accessible to small businesses. S. Beckman will include more information about the programs in the next digital newsletter. E. Swenson suggested developing a FAQ sheet to distribute to businesses. C. Conklin suggested using the printing budget to print the sheets and ask students who need community service hours to deliver the FAQ sheets to businesses.
- Shuttered Venues Grant is new under the latest federal stimulus package and will provide significant financial assistance to those venues that have been required to shut down due to the pandemic. The Chair has contacted The Kate with this information.



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VIII. ADVISORY GROUP REPORTS

A. Business Recognition Awards

D. Cole reported that he would add Pizza Palace to the list of potential long-term businesses to be considered for awards. He expressed concerns about selecting awardees and making presentations during

the pandemic citing the desire to ensure the businesses get the public recognition intended through the events, press and social media. Recommendations were made to present the award at the business location and use photos of the business owner in front of the business rather than holding an event at Town Hall or the Pavilion. He and J. DeCristoforo will review the list and make recommendations at the February meeting.

B. Affordable Housing Taskforce

E. Swenson provided an update on the Affordable Housing Taskforce. The taskforce members have put forward great ideas. Plans include distributing a survey about affordable housing perceptions and availability. The taskforce anticipates concluding its work by the end of May. The Chair asked if it would be useful to hold a joint meeting of EDC, Zoning Commission and Planning Commission to educate, generate ideas and answer questions about affordable housing. The EDC agreed that a joint meeting may be useful.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Business Support Program Brainstorm

The Chair opened the meeting to discussion of how the EDC could support businesses during the late winter and spring during the pandemic. Suggestions:

- Business BINGO to encourage retail and restaurant purchases (each BINGO square is a \$ amount spent at a business);
- Scavenger Hunt to encourage community presentation in making items and then distributing them in stores where the public can look for them and earn prizes for finding all the items;
- Something that would draw families to town and provide activities for kids;
- Strolling activities – musicians or jugglers or other entertainment that continues to move so they don't draw a crowd in one area but it adds to the enjoyment of spending time in Old Saybrook;
- Art from the P&R Community Art Project could be displayed in empty storefronts;
- S. Beckman will contact P&R about upcoming programming that EDC could support and complement efforts to bring people into town.

B. Holiday Light Displays

Members discussed ideas for drawing people into Old Saybrook during the holiday season such as a light display on the Town Green. Chester's stars and lights were used as an example. Suggestions:

- Themed light display such as Colonial Heritage;
- Pair it up with food/drinks;
- Work with other departments to construct, break down and store items used annually;
- Do something on the Town Green and Main Street in the spring;
- Offer programs or demonstrations such as flower arrangement, painting and other arts that can also include kids.



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X. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

M. Pugliese noted the potential development of a seasonal and movable outdoor restaurant concept being presented to the Zoning Commission for the Dock 'n' Dine site. Commissioners were all in support of the concept and the creative use of an area that poses significant challenges to redevelopment. The concept being discussed is creative, vital to economic development, will improve a blighted property at Saybrook Point, and provide an outdoor option during the pandemic. S. Beckman will contact the developer and invite him to the February meeting to discuss the plans and how the EDC can support his efforts.

M. Pugliese announced he will be resigning from the Chairmanship and from the EDC saying it has been a pleasure to work with the Commissioners. He will step down after the February meeting.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 8:20pm until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Economic Development Commission which will be held on Thursday, February 11, 2021 at 7:00 P.M., via video conference; **MADE** by D. Prendergast, **SECONDED** by C. Conklin; **VOTED IN FAVOR:** M. Pugliese, C. Conklin, D. Cole, S. Roberts, E. Swenson, and D. Prendergast; **OPPOSED:** none; **ABSTAINED:** none; **APPROVED:** 6-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan W. Beckman, Economic Development Director
Acting Recording Clerk