



CHESTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

April 08, 2024 at 4:30 pm

Location: Chester Town Hall Meeting Room - Fl 2 and Microsoft Teams

1. Seating of Members

EDC Chair Pat Bandzes called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm.

Commission members present: Pat Bandzes, Carlie Dailey, Douglas Mahana. Heather Amara-Miles joined the meeting at 4:35 pm.

Audience of Citizens: No citizens present.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Carlie motioned for approval of 3/11/24 Meeting DRAFT minutes with edits. Douglas seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Audience of Citizens

No citizens present.

4. Commercial Listings and Transactions Update

20 Water Street

Moodus Mud Coffee Roasters have withdrawn their request to rent this property. Since then, an Old Saybrook resident has submitted a request to rent the property. There is an upcoming meeting with the interested person to learn more.

59 Winthrop Rd (Kenyon Property)

Sale of this property is expected to close by the end of this month. The new owners will still need to come before the Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z) for appropriate permits. No issues are anticipated for that process.

33 Liberty Street

The new owners met with Zoning and Building officials on March 21st to review project plans. They will attend the April 11th P&Z meeting for a preliminary discussion.

3 Inspiration Lane

The owner was interested in developing the remainder of this property. EDC helped connect the property owner with a local motorcycle sales, parts and service business that is looking to expand their footprint. Pat visited the

tenant's location in Clinton, CT and has been facilitating communications between the owner and tenant. She offered to coordinate a preliminary meeting with Zoning, Building, Sanitation and any other town officials if and when needed.

5. Business Outreach Update

Meetings with Aaron Manor and Astroseal are to be scheduled this month. Pat is collecting business outreach and contact information.

6. EDC Website Revisions and Links

Carlie will work with the web developer to implement the changes to the EDC landing page and links, as discussed at the March meeting. Additional updates will occur in a phased rollout. EDC will contact RiverCOG and explore other options for license-free images for the landing page. EDC will work this month to begin drafting and refining a mission statement.

7. Cell Tower Update

Last week, First Selectman Cindy Lignar and Pat met with Homeland Towers, who are developing 3 proposed towers in Haddam Neck, Tylerville, and East Haddam. These projects may help improve cell signals in Chester down to Parkers Point boat launch and the Chester Veterinary Clinic. Homeland Towers remains interested in Chester, but do not currently have a property on which they are interested in developing. They have reviewed town-owned properties and been encouraged to talk to private citizens, but no properties of interest have emerged. Cell coverage for residents and emergency services in and around downtown remains a key issue. Homeland Towers will be at an upcoming informational session at the April 23rd Board of Selectmen meeting.

8. Village Center Updates - Parking, Deliveries, Signage

There was a Merchants' meeting on April 4th. Local restaurant owners were not in attendance. Chris Howe sent First Selectman Cindy Lignar and Pat an email with concerns of the merchants following the meeting. There is concern among the merchants about the lack of foot traffic downtown. While weekend foot traffic seems to be weather-dependent, it is less clear why there has been so little during the week.

Concerns were expressed that some people in town are trying to avoid media attention for Chester. The merchants, however, are hoping for as much media attention as possible. EDC will continue to think of ways to quantify and contextualize the economic contribution of our downtown to Chester. Douglas will meet with town assessor Emily Eckenroth this month to explore potential analyses.

The Terris Theater has three upcoming shows this season and they are expected to be big drivers of foot traffic to downtown. This is an increase from two shows in the 2023 season, and prior to that the Terris Theater has been shuttered from the 2020 season. The 2024 "ConnDucky Derby" Duck Race and Earth Day are upcoming events expected to drive foot traffic to our downtown. Channel 12 was filming downtown last week for a

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segment on their “Road Trip: Close to Home” show, which airs weekly across their Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey stations and gets published online.

EDC will continue to support the merchants in local, regional, and state advertising. EDC will also continue to explore options to promote expansion of commercial areas up towards Terris Theater, or down towards North Quarter Park.

9. First Selectman Report

Pat reported for First Selectman Cindy Lignar that the town is exploring special recycling receptacles for pizza boxes downtown. People have been leaving them on top of, or near, trash receptacles because the boxes do not fit easily into the existing trash cans.

10. Commissioner/Tourism Updates

Rebecca Mead sent in a report stating that the MCRC grant cycle had over 100 applications. This was the highest number of applications received by the program to date. Grant recipients will be selected at the end of May.

Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce is accepting nominations for its annual Small Business Award. EDC should nominate Chester businesses for consideration. Carlie will forward the email and we will discuss the nomination process over email. Nominees need to be a member of the Chamber to be eligible. Rebecca Mead can provide more input since she works with the Chamber. The deadline for submissions is April 28th.

11. Adjourn

The next meeting will be held on Monday, May 13, 2024 at 4:30 pm.

Carlie motioned to adjourn. Heather seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Douglas Mahana, Recording Secretary