



CHESTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Special Meeting Minutes - APPROVED

July 13, 2023 at 4:30pm  
Location: Chester Town Office Meeting Room

**1. Call to Order/ Roll Call**

Meeting called to order at 4:31pm. (NOTE: This meeting was rescheduled from July 10 due to an issue at Town Hall.)

Commission members present: Pat Bandzes, Rebecca Mead, Cindy Lignar, Doug Mahana, Carlie Dailey.  
Tourism Representative: Bekah Wright. No audience of citizens.

Newest member, Doug Mahana, introduced himself to the group.

**2. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Cindy motioned for approval of 06/12/23 DRAFT Meeting minutes with noted edits. Rebecca seconded. Four voted yes, Doug abstained. Motion passed.

**3. Recent Commercial Listings and Transactions**

Pat provided a brief update on this agenda item for the new member.

47 Middlesex Ave (Saint Joseph's Parish)

Application to be received by Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) at tonight's meeting.

33 Liberty St.

Nothing to report. EDC should continue discussion about possible zoning changes with PZC to make the property more marketable.

Norma Terris

Nothing to report. Shows will begin in July and the banners will be up soon on N. Main St.  
Bekkah Wright noted a discounted night for Chester residents will be announced soon.

**4. Progress on Town Initiatives**

Kenyon Property

Town received the final report with no environmental contamination noted for the property. BoS next step is to talk to the neighboring property owners to see if there is interest to purchase the property. If there is no interest from neighboring property owners, the property will be put up for sale.

#### 20 Water St.

It was noted that this is a key location for EDC visitor friendly initiatives and that the BoS is pursuing an electric vehicle station at this location. Pat will try to connect with Martin Heft who was the First Selectmen in 2000 to see if there was a vision at that time when the town purchased the property from Fleet Bank. The current lease is \$1,500 a month (\$18,000/year) and is up in June 2024.

There is no public water or sewer service to this property and the Town is still assessing whether the slight detection of PFAS from recent water testing will prevent the well there from being considered a "Public Water Source." This location is also in a flood zone where the soil is most likely not suitable for septic or wastewater discharge - even a composting toilet would need to have a backup system.

Pat will continue conversations with Charlene regarding this town-owned property and building regarding the EDC's plan for visitor friendly initiatives.

Cindy noted the 2013 Main Street Project should be referenced for additional information on the extension of sewer service on North Main Street. Plans call for the sewer to be extended to the Great Brook Bridge, about 450 ft more. The project is currently in preliminary design and will be paid with a STEAP grant and ARPA funding.

#### Coordination of Bike/Pedestrian/Visitor-Friendly Initiatives (RSA implementation, Heritage Loop Trail, downtown bathroom, water stations)

Water Stations - We will continue to investigate options for this at Cedar Lake, North Quarter Park, and the Village. Pat noted a good site would be located on/near the public water line. Bekah mentioned the Library as a possible location.

Waste/Recycling - Three options were presented at the last BoS meeting. Very affordable quotes received from Olsens, but not visibly appealing (red colored). If Chester purchases recycling bins ourselves we need to find out if Olsen will take waste from a third party bin.

Bathrooms - BoS is getting additional ADA porta potty quotes for the 20 Water Street parking lot as a temporary solution. This item should be on the agenda at their next meeting.

EDC members will continue to investigate a permanent solution to this issue.

Heritage Trail Loop/RSA - The BoS is working on some of the small/quick fixes per RSA recommendations, the EDC is ready to help when requested. Chester is responsible for getting our section of the Heritage Loop in order which dovetails with the RSA recommendations. Traffic-calming measures have been included in the RSA

### Cell Service

Field meeting took place on June 26 and a draft site plan from the engineer was received today. BoS is reviewing the lease agreement and will contact the engineer to discuss next steps and questions on the site plan. Proximity to the Gateway Zone, neighboring properties, wetlands may be of concern.

### Sustainable CT Silver Certification

Continued work to meet the August 15 deadline for revisions to application.

500 points are needed for the Silver Certification designation. With the help of the summer fellow working with us, 150 unclaimed points were found. Work continues through volunteer training and touring of local recycling centers. Chester currently has 330 of the 500 points needed.

### Creation of Cultural District

Rebecca, EDC lead for the Cultural District Commission, continues to meet with Carol LeWitt, Bekah Wright, and Eric Dilner, Shoreline Arts. The district needs to be “walkable”; the definition of this term needs clarification. The Town of Chester needs to pursue the district, holding a public meeting is the next step then the Cultural District Subcommittee can be created. The public meeting is expected to be held in August or September. Discussion of bringing in a mapping tool to map assets in town as part of the next steps.

## **5. Other Topics of Interest**

### East Haddam Bridge

The bridge is back to 63-hour closures. Rebecca will ask at the next Merchant’s meeting to see how the schedule has impacted Chester business. Haddam businesses located on Bridge Street reported revenues being down 50-60% on Mondays and Tuesdays as a result of the first two 63-hour closures.

Funding is available from the State Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for businesses affected by the bridge closures.

### Charter Commission

Email update went out today via town-wide email contact list.

### Parks & Rec Special Meeting - Boardwalk Project - July 11 @ 7pm

An update on this proposed initiative was provided by Parks & Rec on July 11. This project fits nicely with all of the initiatives EDC is working on. Next steps are for Parks & Recreation to meet with Inlands/Wetlands to approve or deny the project.

### Liaison Reports

Bekah reported that Mandy resigned from the Merchant’s Group, but has been helping with the transition for others to take over her responsibilities. There will be a group leading the organization, rather than one person.

**Town of Chester**

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Chelsea from the Village Bistro will be secretary, Chris Howe from Wayfinder will be the lead, Lisa Berube from Essex Bank will manage the finances, Karen from Lark is also helping, and Bekah is the non-merchant group member.

Bekah reported that the Merchants would like to have a mixer with the Harbor Commission and EDC. She will send an update after the next meeting, Monday, July 17.

**Haddam Roundabouts**

Pat will attend the informational meeting on July 18, 6:30 pm. The meeting is hosted by RiverCOG, the Middlesex Chamber, and the Towns of Haddam and East Haddam.

**Middlesex County Revitalization Commission Grants**

Rebecca reported that grants will be voted on July 19, announced August 1, and funds disbursed August 15. One of the Chester businesses was the highest scorer - this is exciting! Grant applications will again be open in September 2023.

**6. August Meeting and CT Tourism Speaker**

Bekah reported that Anthony Anthony, the Chief Marketing Officer for Connecticut Tourism, would like to visit Chester. It was determined that the best time would be for one of the First Friday's, possibly August 4. He would like to speak with the EDC, Merchants, and the Harbor Commission to discuss how to best utilize limited state marketing funding for Chester. Bekah will put together a proposed itinerary for this event and send it to the EDC and others.

The Visit CT website can be utilized to promote Chester events along with sharing articles to boost marketing.

**7. Audience of Citizens**

No audience of citizens.

**8. Adjournment**

It was decided that the August 14 meeting will be canceled due to Merchant Mixer and Anthony Anthony visit. Next EDC meeting is scheduled for September 11, 4:30 at the Town Hall. The meeting adjourned at 6:01pm.

Respectfully submitted by  
Carlie Dailey, Recording Secretary