

## Chester Economic Development Commission

Monday, 1/10/22 at 2:00 ZOOM

Minutes - Approved 2/14/22

### 1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 2:00 by Jon Joslow, Chair

### 2. Roll Call

Attending EDC members: Pat Bandzes, Adam Perl

Others attending: First Selectwoman Charlene Janecek and Kim Megrath

### 3. Approval of minutes of 12/14/21 EDC meeting

12/14/21 minutes were edited and approved (Pat motioned, Adam seconded). Edited changes incorporated into final minutes and filed.

### 4. Follow up from 12/14/21 meeting:

*Jon made a request of EDC to add an agenda item related to standardizing the time of our EDC standing monthly meeting calendar from 7:15PM to 2:00PM on the second Monday of the month.*

*Motion to add this agenda item: by Pat, seconded by Adam*

*Agenda item discussed. Request satisfies the meeting time preference of the three attendees.*

*Motion to approve: by Pat, seconded by Adam.*

**MOTION APPROVED**

*Followup: Jon to notify Jenny*

#### 4a. Chester businesses update

Charlene reported that businesses expansion, employee housing shortages, and skilled labor shortages are pressing issues.

Susan's 1/10/22 email report to EDC provides an update and poses several questions and concerns addressed in part through the agenda and also via Charlene's comments, also noted on the 1/20/22 minutes.

#### 4b. EDC Maintained Lists:

Report 1. Chester Available Properties List (properties available for sale or lease)

Pat will maintain this quarterly and work with Charlene to make this important document suitable for public access/distribution via the EDC website.

#### Follow-up:

Pat will distribute a draft to the EDC that will include and address the following discussion points:

- Scrub the document for any information that does not expose the Town to any liability.

- Include a legally reviewed disclaimer on the footnote of each page.
- Include the Issue Date or Date Updated in the document heading (versus the date printed).
- Make the document “official” by appropriate placement of the Town of Chester seal.
- Add a contact telephone and email address. Noted that all EDC emails go through the Selectwomen’s office—that is the way it has historically been done. EDC may want its own mailbox for direct official communication versus a mix of personal emails.
- Issue the document as a PDF.

## Report 2. Chester Business List

A list of Chester businesses is non-existent. The discussion centered around the importance of maintaining this information for both emergency (recent example: Covid related businesses communications) and for general information purposes. It was the consensus that we should develop this list and fit it into our list of priorities. It is an unassigned priority at this point and will be added to future agendas.

### Discussed Follow up once this project is assigned:

Assign a member of EDC to develop and maintain list.

- Contact Bill Bernhart because he was part of a subcommittee of the Long Term Recovery initiatives to reach businesses in town.
- Kim Megrath volunteered her expertise and experience once this is assigned
- Discuss with Assessor, the most efficient way to obtain and maintain the database of businesses registered by the Chester LTR group. She maintains a list of all businesses in Chester because they file annually. This data may exclude home-based and other forms of commercial / revenue generating businesses.
- Contact other EDCs to learn from their practices.
- Recommend timeframe for refreshed/updated information

### 4c. Contact major businesses for continuity purposes

The need to have a systematic approach to developing, maintaining, and growing our relations with the major businesses was discussed with Charlene. It is a high priority with her that we reach out as a team to the existing businesses to understand their present and future needs. All this is important to protect and nurture primary sources of Chester’s tax revenue. The consensus was that the EDC will take the lead in organizing, scheduling, and follow-up these meetings. The EDC will schedule these meetings with Charlene. Jon will take on this program.

### Follow-up:

Jon to prepare a draft work plan including:

- Obtain a list of the top 20 taxpayers from the Grand List
- Draft the standard baseline information to be discussed during the meeting).

- Draft standard interview questionnaire to provide coverage of current concerns, issues, opportunities in addition to future needs, etc.) This would be used by a member of EDC during each session.
- Follow-up mechanism, timing, and responsibility

#### 4d. EDC Outreach assignments

- BOS (Jon)
- P&Z (Jon)
- BOF (Jon)
- Down county Chamber of Commerce (Pat)- it was noted that these meetings include Chester, Deep River, and Chester and meets 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month)
- Chester Merchants (Susan- to be discussed/confirmed next EDC meeting)
- Rotary (Susan- to be discussed/confirmed next EDC meeting)

#### 4e. 5 Town EDC

It was agreed that this dormant group will be removed from future agendas.

#### 4f. EDC membership

It was agreed that once we define our EDC priorities, we will actively recruit to fill EDC vacancies.

### **5. Chester leadership priorities**

Charlene wants the POCD to be prioritized so the town can implement its plan, for there to be one roadmap to follow and so that we are on the same page.

Because the plan was written several years ago, it was agreed that the addition of Covid and other unforeseen issues and opportunities will be rolled into the existing plan so that it is relevant and updated (to the extent that some initiatives are already underway or intentionally delayed). Once updated, it will be prioritized under the First Selectwomen's leadership.

It was agreed that the POCD needed a process to prioritize and to obtain related funding so it can be implemented with the assistance and coordination across all town boards, commissions, and town office operations.

#### Follow-up:

Jon to schedule an EDC/First Selectwomen workshop regarding integrating implementation of the POCD objectives/initiative in order that the EDC is able to focus on the highest economic priorities.

Workshop/meeting dedicated to this topic to be scheduled late January or early February.

#### Additional update from Charlene:

Norma Terris Theater - discussions regarding development underway

59 Winthrop Road (Skyview property)- Charlene reported that Phase 2 (sampling) has started

Table/Outdoor Dining ordinance- P&Z addressing (follow-up re: Susan's 1/10/22 email)

Garbage ordinance- per Charlene, dropped for now. Addressing the issue with the one downtown restaurant rather than pursuing an ordinance. (follow-up re: Susan's 1/10/22 email)

A major manufacturer has been trying to expand for two years and has not found any room in Chester so is looking elsewhere.

Follow-up: High priority for EDC and will be addressed during the upcoming Business contact program. See 4c, above.

## **6. Update on Existing EDC initiatives**

Affordable Housing- Pat reported that our plan is due to the State by 6/22. River COG is writing 12 of the 17 town's plans. Chester is one of them. 1/24/22 and 3/11/22 for public information and Chester presentations, respectfully.

*Note: At 2:57 Adam left the meeting so this EDC meeting was effectively adjourned. The meeting continued with the following, with no EDC action necessary.*

6a) Chester Community Partnership update- Kim reported receipt of \$5K from the Middlesex Community Foundation to provide technology to 20 residents. There might be matching funds to extend reach. 211 to be expanded. A priority is to address that there is not before or after school childcare in Chester and that is an important factor in attracting and keeping young families to our town.

### **6b) Single point of contact for EDC**

Discussed liaisons to various boards and commissions as a way to spread the work, communication, and effectiveness of the EDC. Refer to 4D, EDC Outreach Assignments, above.

## **7. Audience of Citizens- none**

## **8. Future follow-up summary**

(included in "follow up" above under each topic.)

## **9. Adjournment**

See #6, above.

Respectfully submitted

Jon Joslow

Chair  
Chester Economic Development Commission