



CHESTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Monday, July 11 2022

DISCUSSION NOTES

**(Note- Having no quorum for this meeting, it became a community discussion. The meeting primarily updated progress from the 6/15/22 EDC meeting).**

1. Call to Order / Roll Call

THERE WAS NO QUORUM, HENCE THE MEETING WAS CANCELED PER STATE STATUTES. The following are the discussion notes:

Jon Joslow, Pat Bandzes, Charlene Janecek, Mike Sanders, Kim Megrath, Cary Hull, Richard Strauss, Mandy Carroll.

2. Draft minutes 5/23/22 and 6/15/22- to be reviewed/approved at next EDC meeting. Pat provided comments/corrections for the 6/15/22 draft. Minutes to be approved at next EDC meeting.
3. Recent commercial listings and transactions- no material change. Approximately 20 commercial properties are being tracked.
4. Progress against existing town initiatives

6/14/22 Projects/Initiatives list

**59 Winthrop Road (Skyview)**

Lead: BOS/Charlene Janecek

5/23/22- Paperwork from Atlas signed, Charlene to follow up

6/15/22- 104K state brownfield grant notification received to cover initial remediation and testing.

There is funding available for a second phase of remediation if that is required. No incremental costs to the town based upon available brownfield funding. Once remediated, the Town will seek to sell it.

7/11/22- Town received approval for Phase III clean up state Brownfield grant reported 6/15/22 of \$115K. Town has to spend the money and then we are paid back- requires BOF approval before proceeding. Charlene to recommend that the BOF repurposing the previously approved wi-fi funding to provide the necessary source of temporary funding so there is no incremental impact to taxpayers. Approval by Town Meeting is required.



### **Meet with large Chester employers**

Lead- BOS/Charlene Janecek, Support- EDC/All members

5/23/22- Charlene to request Jenny to schedule with select employers and to coordinate as best as possible with EDC so a member could attend. Not a requirement, but an objective. Jon to draft an interview format with standard questions as part of a call report to be filed with the Selectwomen's office so there is a permanent record and history.

6/15/22- Now that the budget is passed, she has asked Jenny to schedule appointments. Jon to send an interview format for comments. Jen to send the dates and times convenient for Charlene and the employers to all EDC members to join.

7/11/22- Charlene hasn't had time to meet with other businesses. Her next priority is RotoFrank because they want to expand and there is no room to do so.

Followup: Charlene to request that Jenny to set up a joint meeting with BOS and EDC.

### **WIFI/BROADBAND/FREE INTERNET ACCESS DOWNTOWN**

Lead: BOS/Charlene Janecek, Support: BOS/Ed Mehan, EDC/ Susan Wright

5/23/22- Charlene signed the agreement for the \$93K Steap funding but it does not commit the project to move forward. Charlene is working on the costs of providing free internet service downtown. She is also addressing cell reception within Chester.

6/15/22- To be discussed at BOS meeting this evening. One-time and recurring expenses appear too high. This 10-year discussion has changed over time. The consensus is that we need cell coverage for all of Chester and this remains a problem downtown. Discussions about new cell towers as a solution.

7/11/22- Charlene reported that the BOS decided to decline the grant and to focus on the need to provide cell coverage throughout Chester.

THIS ABOVE PROJECT IS CLOSED. See "Cell Reception across Chester"

### **Cell Reception across Chester**

6/15/22- Charlene contacted cell tower specialist Ray Lemley who has contacted two companies who are surveying town-owned property to determine if there is an area where Chester can locate a cell tower. Regulations for town-owned cell tower permits are less cumbersome than private property installations that can take two years.

Jon suggested that the coverage problem first needs to be defined. To that end, he suggested overlaying cell coverage maps by cell phone providers. Then to find out how to obtain full coverage for all property owners in Chester.

7/11/22- Charlene reported that Ray Lemley is trying to find someone to put up a cell tower. If the town owns the property, the regulation and approvals are minimal (Siting Council approval not required). Locating a tower on private property is about a two year process. Three possible sites being considered: Firehouse- existing mini-tower is presently located. The back corner of the



Maple Street Municipal parking lot and within the Chester Town Office property are also being considered. A small town-owned parcel at the top of Bate's hill could also be a location.

Charlene emailed Ray last week and has not heard back from him.

Pat reported that Ray had Haddam had a similar issue that has been corrected by working with cell companies to put repeaters on their towers. Charlene reported that her Verizon cell does not cover Bridge Street and the 82 connector to East Haddam bridge.

### **Transportation to and from Chester Marinas to Chester Center**

Lead- BOS/Charlene Janecek, Support- EDC/Pat Bandzes

5/23/22- Charlene meeting with marina representatives this Thursday to discuss a pilot program and the cost structure. Cost to Chester \$10K. Small bus from Downtown Transit is accessible on an application where the rider specifies a pickup. Deep River has expressed interest as well. Chester's motivation is to reduce parking congestion. Pat will join Charlene at this meeting.

6/15/22- Charlene and Jon (in Pat's absence) met with three Chester marina owners to determine their interest in providing transportation. 1 of 3 of who attended liked the concept. There was no response to the invitations to all other clubs and marinas. It appears that most of the activity at these marinas relate to boat owners who drive their cars to the marinas. If they need to go into town, they drive their car. Charlene asked for statistics to quantify the potential demand for local trolley service. The transportation needs of boaters who are visiting any of these marinas remains unknown as is their interest in public transportation to and from downtown Chester. This is on hold waiting for feedback from the marinas that might benefit from this \$10K initiative.

7/11/22- One of three marinas responded to Charlene. Sensing limited interest, Charlene cannot justify spending \$10K in seed money to pursue it.

THE ABOVE PROJECT IS CLOSED

### **Boardwalk from North Quarter Park to the Cemetery Road**

Leads- Park and Rec/Chair Mike Abramson and John Ivimey, EDC Support- Susan Wright

5/23/22- no update

6/15/22- no update, Rotary has some money allocated. John indicated to Charlene that they are trying to determine the scope of the necessary land survey of town property. The cost is \$7K for a partial and \$12K for a complete survey that addresses two proposed paths that appear to traverse wetlands. Full cost estimates are estimated at \$200K. Susan to request an update.

7/11/22- Charlene received a call from Norm that there was potential funding available for this project if we could respond within a week. He needed a budget. Charlene contacted Mike and John—the numbers were not available to Charlene so the opportunity passed.

Charlene reported that an estimated \$20K to survey two paths (one straight through wet lands and another with curves with minimal wet lands). There are some funds that can be requested through Park and Rec for this purpose—Charlene did not recall the amount.



FOLLOWUP: Charlene to request updated plan from Mike and John

### **Child Care in Chester**

#### Lead- Chester Community Partnership/Kim Megrath

5/23/22- no update from 5/11 report except CBSRZ announced their interest in renting out a portion of that facility to a preschool operator.

6/15/22- Kim Megrath provided the following written update on the proposed opening of a CBSRZ early care and education program:

“1. In progress: Survey of families in Essex, Deep River, Chester, and possibly Haddam to assess the needs of these communities for infant/toddler and pre-K classrooms, as well as school-aged program (before/after school). The planned distribution of the survey was last Wednesday, June 8 with return date of June 20. Apparently, CBSRZ is revising the survey. I have not received new dates.

2. Ongoing conversation with Valley Shore YMCA as possible partner. I understood that the timeline for a completed business plan, which should include both application for licensure and budget is June 30, 2022.

I have not yet received an overview of the project management with actions, timeline, and assigned responsibility that I requested from CBSRZ (and Y) earlier this month. I will continue to update the EDC. “

- 6/15/22 email from Kim to EDC Chair Jon Joslow

7/11/22 Kim reported that she previously met (via Zoom) with First Selectpersons from Chester, Deep River, Essex, State Rep Christine Palm and CBSRZ President Izzy Greenburg- re: possibility of supporting Tri-Town childcare program with the notion of possibly including Haddam because of a 10-15 minute drive is the typical range families will drive to a childcare location.

A committee of Kim, Izzy, a representative with Tri Town and the YMCA was to finish the survey of needs, the three selectmen agreed to post it to their web sites. Kim had previously presented a template that this committee could tailor to the community. She told the Committee they need a business plan and a project management plan to move the project forward. The Committee posted a revised survey on social media but has not distributed it to the three towns as planned. Kim feels that presenting the survey on social media lacks evidenced-based research methodology and will therefore not necessarily be reflective of the community's needs.

She is concerned that the Committee (Rabbi Bellows, Wendy- Administration, Izzy Greenberg- President and a representative of TriTown) failed to follow through with any communication after hosting the Zoom call with the selectmen.

Due to the lack of a project plan, she is doubtful that there will be a program in place by the fall. It is her understanding that CBSRZ and the YMCA now intend on teaming up on their own program.

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She noted that she spent a year working with the YMCA to reinstitute the after care program at Chester Elementary School. That did not move forward.

Child care available in the Fall:

Chester- 3 licensed childcare programs. They occur in homes. There is a tuition based Montessori school.

Deep River- unknown # of in-home childcare licenses. After 30 years, the Church Street childcare has discontinued. The Trustees have voted to provide a faith-based program in the Fall. Not open from 7AM-7PM.

No updates from R4 or Chester Elementary School regarding the availability of before or after school program this year.

Kim discussed child care with Aaron Page, President Chester PTO.

From an EDC perspective, Kim feels that child care provides working families and otherwise at risk families with the ability to live and or work in Chester. A major objective of this initiative is to provide an ability for all children to enter and engage in their school years ready to learn.

Sizing demand:

1,725 Chester Households

200 children in CES

No guestimate on #Chester children in need nor the # children that might be assisted of parents who live outside of Chester but work in or around Town. Suggestion made to send survey link to area towns and businesses.

Followup: Kim waiting to receives Survey Results (statistically measuring the demand), Project Plan and Business Plan so she can lend her background to move this initiative along.

### **East Haddam Ped/Bike Path Spur**

Lead- EDC/Pat Bandzes, Support-Chester Sustainability Committee/Cindy Lignar

5/23/22 - Cindy, Rick and Pat met last week to coordinate efforts to improve Chester's ped/bike infrastructure. No Locip funding to be available to pay for sidewalks (connectivity) for at least 3 years.

6/2/22- Cindy Lignar, Pat Bandzes, Rick Holoway, Stephanie Stroud- Community Planner with National Park Service- Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program, Bob Casner – East Haddam EDC. They walked the proposed “East Haddam Ped/Bike Spur” as part of a regional initiative to connect 9-10 mile loop, 154, over the East Haddam Bridge, Town Street, River Road, take the Ferry from East Haddam to Chester, Ferry Road and back to 154. The proposed spur (initiated by EDC several years ago) would start at the intersection of Ferry Road and 154 and



continue across the street at the Moravela's Pizzeria (139 Middlesex Ave) traffic light on Water Street. The spur follows Water Street through the center of town, past the Post Office to the 154 intersections then continue, left, until intersecting the beginning of the spur at Moravela's. The loop is 2 miles.

Pat reported that Stephanie noted the condition of the road and its narrowness. It is a State Road. The Federal Agency of the National Park Service (NPS), has an arm that focuses on working with local communities to develop recreation projects. There is a lot of federal funding for projects like this. East Haddam received an in-kind services grant from this agency that performed a feasibility/design study that is a long-term project that fits the criteria for federal assistance. The next step is for the team to redraw the proposed map to make us part of the plan. Bob Casner is our single point of contact who interfaces with Stephanie. Pat is EDC's contact for this project.

7/11/22: No follow-up from EDC at this time. Bob Casner to contact Chester EDC as appropriate.

### **Complete Streets- Sidewalks, Crosswalks, etc.**

Lead- Chester Sustainability Committee/Cindy Lignar, Support- EDC/Pat Bandzes

5/23/22 - Cindy, Rick and Pat met last week to coordinate efforts to improve Chester's ped/bike infrastructure. No Locip funding to be available to pay for sidewalks (connectivity) for at least 3 years.

See "*East Haddam Ped/Bike Path Spur*" meeting on 6/2/22

7/11/22- Cindy reported via an email that she is compiling the results of the town-wide survey and will present her findings to the BOS then present to the public.

Cindy completed a Road Safety Audit Application, working with Ed Meehan, to increase safety and reduce road crashes. Report is scheduled for this week's BOS meeting.

### **Handicapped Accessible Public Bathroom for downtown Chester**

Lead- EDC/Susan Wright, Support- BOS- Charlene Janecek

5/23/22- there is interest in locating the bathrooms at 4 Water Street (the old drive-through bank branch on Water Street). There is no septic and the thought is either porta-potties or composting units in or around that building. Charlene will check to see when that lease expires.

6/15/22- Charlene reported that the lease expires in 2024. The building is not on the town sewer. Susan to scope out options/alternatives including the one-time, non-recurring expenses and the ongoing operational costs.

7/11/22- Susan not present to report status

### **Water station for people and pets**

Lead- EDC/Susan Wright, Support- BOS- Charlene Janecek

5/23/22- Charlene said that this has been tried in the past and that the water company wants \$20K/line plus an annual cost for the water. Charlene is fine with this project going forward but

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that the one time and recurring expenses would have to be understood in advance. No one is working on this presently.

Pat mentioned that there is a tie-in to the Bike / Pedi path regarding water stations and toilet facilities. The group that met on 6/2 (see above) discussed possible locations.

Susan suggested that for that reason, she will address both issues.

7/11/22- Susan not present to report status

### **Recycling stations in Chester**

Lead: UNASSIGNED

5/23/22- not discussed

6/15/22- Kim Price is addressing zero waste at the Chester Fair and for the rest of Chester. Charlene said that this is perfect for the Chester Sustainability Committee.

7/11/22- no update

### **47 Middlesex Ave (St. Josephs Parish Center)**

Lead- BOS/Charlene Janecek

5/23/22- Charlene and John G. are meeting Thursday 1:00 with a potential affordable housing developer. Mike might attend.

6/15/22- Charlene reported 2 for-profit companies are in negotiation with the Church to purchase the 3 acre plot for affordable housing. Both are in the design stage. 8-30g process in the works.

Applied in January and awarded in April 2023. Proposals need to go to Norwich Diocese/Bishop for approval.

7/11/22- One developer brought a delegation from the Church to one of their developments in Hartford—Charlene was unable to attend. That MA- based company has 5 basic designs that would be made made to fit onto the 3 acre parcel. 52 units.

Another company is based out of CT. Their plan calls for three buildings that look like houses from Old Wethersfield. Green buffers all around. 40 units (mostly one bedroom). Both affordable housing, not a mix.

Both are for-profit companies. The Church is deliberation.

### **Affordable Housing/Committee**

Lead: EDC/Pat Bandzes

3 town committee to be formed. Affordable housing must follow public health and safety regulations but is exempt from most other restrictions. There is a two story limit in Chester for fire protection reasons. Pat noted that the recently approved Affordable Housing Plan is unrelated to the 47 Middlesex Ave (St. Josephs Parish Center) project.

7/11/22-Regional plan is out for comment. Both companies could have come in at any point for the purpose of affordable housing.



### **East Haddam Swing Bridge Rehabilitation**

Lead: BOS/ Charlene Janecek, Support- EDC/Pat Bandzes

5/23/22- Bridge mapping in Judy, construction in the Fall.

6/15- Charlene reported that the contract has been awarded to same company that built the bridge, American Bridge Company. The roundabouts will start next Spring 2023.

7/11/22- Charlene reported that both roundabouts will be worked on at night only

### **212 Middlesex Ave (Ted Tine Motorsports)**

Lead: BOS/Charlene Janecek

5/23/22- Property still for sale

6/15/22- Charlene is inquiring about the type of remediation that occurred on that property as is it a registerd brownfield.

7/11/22- No update

### **56 Middlesex (Organon)**

Lead: UNASSIGNED

6/15/22- zoning issues restrict potential use. Liquor permit next to the church is an issue and so are restrictions on hour of operation. That appears to be a town ordinance that could be changed.

Discussion centered about who should take the initiative to change the zoning. For now, it will be posted as UNASSIGNED

7/11/22- Charlene reported that another party was looking at this property.

### **Goodspeed at Chester**

Lead: BOS/Charlene

5/23/22- No performances scheduled for this season, 3 productions planned for next year

6/15/22- Meeting with Caryn Paradis who is talking with Goodspeed to develop the property which would include providing space for a 3 show season next year.

7/11/22- No update

### **ARPA Request for Funding for advertising and communication**

Lead: Merchants of Chester/Mandy Carroll, Support- EDC

5/23/22- Charlene would consider supporting an ARPA request once it is presented

6/15/22- EDC approved the \$15K ARPA request. Charlene concurred subject to BOF review.

7/11/22- Mandy may have made modifications after the 6/15/22 EDC meeting before presenting it to the ARPA Committee. She planned to speak with Charlene.

### **33 Liberty Street / MS Brooks Factory**

Lead: UNASSIGNED

5/23/22- Potential buyer -approached P&Z a few months ago. They cannot apply for an affordable housing waiver because they are not the landowner. He doesn't want to purchase the property unless he knows that he can develop the property as he wants.

6/15/22- No update



7/11/22- Potential new buyer.

### **Community Engagement tent at Farmer's Market**

Lead: EDC/Jon Joslow

5/23/22- Jon suggested setting up a summer market 10 x 10 tent that focuses on COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. The intention is to post openings on committees and commissions, and this list of projects which identifies where we need specific assistance to make progress. The booth would be manned by Republicans, Democrats, Independent/other parties and by people who are already involved. Jon to follow up with Susan Hotkowski.

6/15/22- Jon communicated with Susan. There is space and a tent, potentially for Sunday in August.

7/11/22- Jon said that space and a 10 x 10 tent are available. He will schedule a date once the volunteer list is a little more developed.

### **Community volunteerism and leadership initiative**

Lead- EDC/Jon Joslow

5/23/22- Regarding the desire to engage Chester residents to help in the community, Jon will research a successful Essex initiative that trained a new generation of volunteers and community leaders around 25 years ago. Volunteerism, leadership continuity and succession planning are issues in Chester.

7/11/22- Jon was unable to reach Peter Webster, who was First Selectman of Essex at the time they successfully launched a community engagement / leadership initiative. He asked Kim for her thoughts on developing community engagement and leadership program that would address participate of students through retirees living in Chester.

Kim is involved with Leadership Greater Hartford and will discuss the possibility of tailoring some of their programs to serve on boards, commissions and on project teams.

### **10. Audience of citizens**

Richard Strauss read a letter to EDC from Leslie Strauss in support of using ARPA funds to purchase and install supercharger electronic charging stations at public parking lots at Cedar Lake, the Meetinghouse, Town Office building, Elementary School and the three public lots surrounding the Village. This letter will be formally read into the EDC's next regularly scheduled meeting providing a quorum is present.

### **11. Adjournment**

The discussion ended at 2:22PM

Respectfully submitted,

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Jon Joslow, Chair