

**Town of Stonington
Economic Development Commission
Special Meeting
March 17, 2011**

Attendees: Blunt White, Ed Planeta, Ed Hart, Amy Arruda, Robynne Madison

Call to Order: 7:06pm by Chairman White

Motion to accept minutes of the meeting held February 17, 2011 was made by Chair man White, so moved by Ed Planeta and seconded by Ed Hart and accepted by all members.

Old Business:

EDC Website - Member Wendy Bury received the bill for maintaining the website and questioned the large amount. Member Ed Planeta and Chair Blunt White agreed that while the billing covered a period of 5 months, it was expensive. In particular, the line item for "Principal Supervision" charged out at a flat 1.25 hours monthly was not consistent to what other companies have been charged. Member Planeta compared the billing to that of vendor billing from his company and discovered that the Principal Supervision was a flat monthly fee rather than on a per hour basis and 1/3 the hourly fee charged to the EDC.

Member Arruda suggested investigating if the EDC could possibly take on the responsibility of updating portions of the content on the website to reduce the cost. The commission as a whole agreed that the fee should be questioned and a reduction negotiated. Chairman White took the action to first meet with Selectman Haberek to understand what the Town is charged for their website and if we could possibly qualify for a discount under that agreement with the vendor.

Member Arruda investigated both the Town and EDC websites noting that the PDF brochure on the Town website should contain the link to the EDC website for ease of navigation. Additionally, the inclusion of testimonials from existing businesses would help to communicate the benefits of doing business in Stonington.

Signage - No new updates from the last P&Z meeting. Agenda item was postponed to the next meeting due to the lack of time remaining as a result of extended discussions on other P&Z agenda items.

Solutions for Stonington Business Outreach follow up - no new updates. Discussion did take place regarding format put forth by Selectman Haberek and the intended audience and outcome. Member Planeta provided extensive research surrounding the idea implemented by the keynote speaker of the Business Outreach forum, home based businesses, and its feasibility in Stonington. His research, based on the statistics from the 2010 Census, revealed a rapid rise in vacancy of \$500k+ homes in the Town which may be ideal for individuals looking to locate to Stonington and operate a home based business. The discussion prompted the question of how to get this information out to potential new business owners as well as to entice existing business owners to the forum. The EDC as a whole agreed the message put forth should have teeth to draw in and retain participants. It was suggested that in addition to recognizing business that have succeeded in Stonington under such challenging times, focus should also be put on the problems facing the Town and economic development and possible solutions.

Member Arruda took the action to contact Selectman Haberek with our ideas for developing the agenda.

Waste Water Facilities Plan - No items to discuss. Item serves as a placeholder for future meetings in the event new developments arise. This item is a key component to economic development in Stonington.

Regional and Local Tourism Marketing - no additional items. The suggestion was made at the February 17, 2011 meeting by Member Bury (absent) to draft a letter on behalf of EDC in support of localized tourism organizations. The Governor's budget proposes the Regionalization of Tourism Marketing and elimination of funding for localized organizations. Member Bury took the action to draft a letter for EDC review.

Planning for 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development – Chairman White reiterated that the EDC should begin working on proposal, 5-6 pages, of recommendations for inclusion to the POCD which would advocate economic development in the Town. Chairman White suggested focusing on specific areas such as Liberty Crossing or Taugwonk Road.

Member Hart brought up the previously mentioned idea of engaging a consultant to help compose the plan and reiterated his disagreement sighting he believed that the EDC was capable of developing the proposal in-house if we began working on it now. Member Planeta suggested that the EDC begin by reviewing Ch. 6 of the POCD, noting likes and dislikes. The next meeting of the EDC would then devote a period of time to discuss the chapter's content and to work proposed changes.

Chairman White also noted that while the present key initiative of the EDC is to see through changes to the signage regulations, once the regulations are finalized the POCD would be an ideal follow on initiative.

Pawcatuck Business Retention Efforts - Member Hart requested a follow-up discussion regarding the possibility of creating an Enterprise Zone in lower Pawcatuck. Previous email discussions with Rep. Urban and Sen. Maynard did not provide official resolution. Chairman White took the action to send an email to Sen. Maynard. Member Madison took the action to locate the previous emails exchanged on the topic and to forward them out to the EDC.

Motion to adjourn was made by Member Madison, seconded by Chairman White at 8:47pm.



Approved by Ed White - Chairman EDC
4/24/2011