



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Minutes: Regular Meeting
January 3, 2024 at 5:30pm
OLD LYME MEETING HALL

Remote Access Available Through Call-in

A regular meeting of the Old Lyme Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

Present: Cheryl Poirier, Jean Wilczynski, Wendy Russell, MJ DeRisio, Joe Camean and Mona Colwell were present.

Excused absence: Scott Smith, John Stratton

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Cheryl called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM and welcomed everyone to the January 3, 2024 Economic Development Commission Meeting.

2. Approval of December 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Wendy Russell made a motion to approve the October 4, 2023 Meeting Minutes. Jean Wilczynski seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 4 (Poirier, Wilczynski, Colwell, Russell) in favor, 0 opposed and 1 (DeRisio) abstaining. Joe Camean was not yet present for the vote.

3. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

4. 2024-2025 EDC Budget Submitted

Cheryl advised the Commission that she submitted the 2024-2025 Economic Development Commission budget. As previously discussed and voted on at the last meeting, the EDC requested the same amount of money as last year.

5. Town Economic Metrics

Cheryl reported that Scott Smith will be analyzing some of our economic metrics provided by the State. Scott expects to give an update at the February meeting. MJ stated that she can also share the MLS data with Scott.

6. EDC Focus/Mission Development (continued)

As part of the ongoing work of developing the EDC mission and focus, Cheryl opened a discussion of the vision for Old Lyme's economy, which she stated is different than the vision for the Town itself, which is shared in the POCD. Cheryl had provided the Commissioners a first draft of some elements that could be included as a starting point. MJ shared her reworking of the draft which was met with positive reactions. Cheryl will distribute MJ's working draft to all via email so further thought can be given to the wording.



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Further regarding the Town's economic health, Joe stated he feels that there is a concentration of specific professional knowledge in town he would like to see us work toward incubator opportunities around these knowledge bases. Jean stated that one finding in the RiverCOG Economic Plan is that a lot of our local residents work outside of the area, and that our employees do not live here.

MJ suggested asking high school students for input to why would they choose to live here (or not) in the future.

7. Brief Updates

a. Openings/Closings/Ribbon Cuttings

Cheryl advised the Commission that Sapore will be re-opening over the next two weeks. A ribbon cutting will be held after the restaurant's soft opening. Cheryl will follow up with the date.

b. RiverCOG Regional Economic Development Committee

Cheryl reported that Jean Wilczynski has been appointed to represent Old Lyme on the RiverCOG Regional Economic Development Committee following the development of the RiverCOG's Comprehensive Economic Plan last year. Jean will report back to the EDC on what is going on at the regional level. Cheryl congratulated Jean for her appointment and thanked her for taking it on.

Jean stated that the first meeting will be held in the near future and they will likely have quarterly meetings. MJ asked if the meetings are open to the public. Jean stated that she will find out and report back.

c. Eastern Regional Tourism District (ERTD) Update

Wendy stated that January 15th is the deadline for the region's tourism marketing grants. She stated that she would like to send out another reminder to our tourism assets. She stated that it is a "match grant" meaning the tourism related business or nonprofit must match the money given in the grant with an equal amount.

Wendy shared that the State is now developing a tourism ad campaign to target the market of 35-55 year old demographic. She advised the EDC that if they know of any events or happenings that would appeal to that age group to let her know and they can be submitted. She stated they are also looking for winter ideas to promote to tourists.

d. Real Estate Update

MJ provided the Commission with an update of the real estate market in Old Lyme.

On the residential side there was 10 closings in December. The average price was 785K. Inventory is still low and the demand is high. MJ stated that prices are softening but not really coming down.

On the commercial side there are 2 new leased spaces available on Four Mile River Road. She stated that the property at 47 Hartford Avenue is still for sale. The former Silo and Cherrystones properties are still for sale.



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e. Shoreline Gateway Committee

Joe updated the EDC on the Shoreline Gateway Committee stating that they have discussed a number of topics including flooding at the Cross Lane underpass and the approval of four affordable apartments (at 258-260 Shore Road).

Joe stated that he is looking at the possibility of a blight ordinance for Old Lyme. He stated that he is focusing on visual, lighting and noise. Joe stated that he is looking for further discussion with Eric Knapp (zoning) on the blight issue. The closest one is in East Lyme and he interested in how much time the enforcement officer would have to put in. He stated that he is very sensitive to the time constraints and that a budget would need to be put in place to cover the work. Joe stated at the last meeting Martha gave him permission to contact the town of East Lyme and speak to the zoning enforcement officer there.

Joe advised the Commission that an ADA complaint has been filed for parking at the Sound View lot because of its gravel surface. Joe stated that Martha has stepped down as the Shoreline Gateway Co-Chair as she is now first Selectperson.

f. America 250

Cheryl stated that the 250th anniversary of America is in 2026 and, as discussed at the last meeting, she would like to start looking into this and planning for it. She stated that the State of CT arts and tourism is planning now as well. Cheryl stated she hopes to suggest with John Stratton a Town-wide Committee to be appointment by the Board of Selectmen at the February BOS meeting. MJ suggested some boating tie-in to include the community for the celebration.

8. New Business/Other Business

Cheryl stated that board and commission appointments are being made at the January Board of Selectman meeting. Cheryl and Mona have both requested to be reappointed.

Cheryl stated more information is needed regarding Amtrak revisiting their Eastern CT rail route as well as the closure of the railroad bridge for construction, which will affect the DEEP/Ferry Park.

9. Adjournment

Joe Camean made a motion to adjourn. Mona Colwell seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer D'Amato
Records Clerk for the Old Lyme Economic Development Commission