

Essex Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Essex Town Hall
July 13, 2011

Present: Chairman Lee Thompson
Commissioners Bill Foster, David Winstead, Mark Uihlein,
John Beveridge and Lon Seidman

First Selectman Phil Miller was unable to attend

Commissioner Bob Laundry was excused from today's meeting
Guests: Susan Malan, Alvin Wolfgram, Jim D'Alessio and Judy Heiser

Call to Order:

Chairman Lee Thompson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Chairman Thompson asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 8, 2011 meeting. A motion was offered by Commissioner Beveridge and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Report from Town Hall

n/a - First Selectman Phil Miller is not able to attend the meeting.

Communications/Public Comment:

None

Old Business:

Novelty Lane Project-Lee Thompson

The new drawing has been submitted to DEP for approval. The original drawing had an estimated cost of over one hundred thousand dollars. Anne has submitted another drawing that the Harbor Management Commission is satisfied with. There is still an issue with the stone wall that protrudes out into the pent way. That issue is now being reviewed and addressed. It should be out for bid by the end of August.

Tide Flex Valve-Pratt Street Flooding

We had a meeting with Sue Bailey from DEP. I think the DEP has an appreciation of what we face on Pratt Street. We took more photographs yesterday and she has now seen what it looks like when the river floods and ices over. And she can understand the impact it has on the businesses there, the people can't get to the businesses and the people parked on the street that can't get to their cars without wading through water. It floods approximately fourteen times a year. The design engineers believe we can stop the flooding about 80% of the time. We should have an answer within about a month as to where we can go from here.

STEAP grant submission-Tri Town

It was in Office of Budget and Management on the 23rd and they will now review the submissions and make their recommendations to the Bonding Commission. They will review it in August/September. We received a call from the bus company and they will take \$7,000.00 off the bid for the transportation. They can rail it up to New Jersey and we can pick it up there. Deep River and Chester are very much in favor of this.

New Business

I have had a number of calls and one letter to the editor about parking. Hopefully the trolley and satellite parking will help alleviate these issues. There are problems when there are functions in the park and the vendors park their cars there. We had an agreement with Park and Rec. that anytime there is an activity that they have to park in the satellite parking lot and provide a shuttle, but it is not being enforced.

Essex Village-Main Street Retail Status

Discussion on BOT input

Jim D'Alessio is president of the Board of Trade and Judy Heiser is a former merchant in the town and now an employee of the Board of Trade. They have been invited to our meeting to discuss the retail situation on Main Street.

Jim D'Alessio, "there have been rumors amongst boaters that they will not be coming back due to lack of stores and restaurants". The restaurant issue is a big problem. I hear a lot of concerns from residents regarding the lack of businesses. We have discussed sending letters to landlords to address more aggressive advertising to retailers, not just offices. We are looking for ideas, plans, etc. so that we can have something to tell people when they come to us. There just aren't enough activities, options and evening hours.

Judy Heiser – could your commission invite landlords to work with the Economic Development Commission? There is only one out of seven landlords that belong to the merchant's group. They are unaware of the status and they need to understand their responsibilities.

The rent being quoted to prospective merchants sent to the landlords by EDC is one reason we are having difficulty keeping the stores full. We are getting the same response that the BOT is hearing about the growing presence of Real Estate Offices at the top of the street, the parking situation and the lack of a wider variety of restaurants. Further complaints are voiced about the hours our merchants are open, the number closed on the 4th of July and no evening hours. There are further complaints that we have only two lodging locations.

The town has a restriction on further Bed and Breakfasts and the sewer/septic issues on Main Street are topics we continue to discuss. The Chair of The Zoning Commission understands the issues and the zoning issues are/or will be reviewed.

Everybody is aware the EDC has been the primary force behind the zoning issues on Main Street, the parking issue and have strived to get action. Regrettably, it has been a futile effort too often

Adjournment

Upon a motion by Commissioner Beveridge it was voted unanimously to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Judge