

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING

February 8, 2023

Zoom virtual meeting and in-person at Essex Town Hall, Room A

Present: Susan Malan (Temporary Chairman), James Vineburgh, Bob Day III P & Z liaison, Peter Decker (Zoom), Tom Pinkowish (Zoom), Tom Nichols (Zoom)

Absent: Brian Weinstein, Mary Ellen Barnes

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order by Susan Malan at 4:07 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Peter Decker motioned to approve the minutes and Tom Pinkowish seconded.

INTRODUCTION:

The meeting was held virtually on Zoom and in person at Essex Town Hall.

Visitors:

None

Updates:

Planning and Zoning Report:

See "Zoning Report for the Economic Development Commission" below from Carey Deques.

ACTION ITEMS:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

PoCD - No update.

Existing PoCD priorities - See Below "Zoning Report for the Economic Development Commission"

Harbor Management Plan - Still in queue. Assigned to two or three new different people but no announced time for updates. Trying to work with DEP on new plans for certain restrictions for watercrafts and incorporate it into the Harbor Management Plan. Harbor commission and Harbormaster working on language for various watercrafts

River Road Sidewalk - Susan says that the funding for the sidewalk has been confirmed and surveyors are working on it. No announced time for construction.

Main Street Essex Villages Ivoryton village is full. Centerbrook village has an open space near Spectrum, a small office for rent, and the former Nutmeg Pharmacy for rent. Spencer's corner in Centerbrook is also full. Essex village's only retail space that's vacant is 1 Main Street where Pough used to be. 2 Main Street is rented to Old Beautiful Antiques who have moved from Clinton. Lloyd and Ida moved out from 7 North Main Street. Antique shop that used to be at 7 North Main Street is going to be reopened in its place, coming soon. blp ENTERPRISES building next to Page Taft Compass is empty and privately on the market. Concerns of parking on Main Street

posing issues for retailers; office workers in the area often park on the Main Street despite a 2 hour limit on parking in the spots. Difficulty enforcing any parking restrictions in the area.

NEW BUSINESS:

P & Z Process with Business/Property Owners - Peter Decker comments on his difficulties with planning and zoning applications. Comments on getting approval for a renovated building has been tedious and unnecessarily challenging due to people not staying on the same page. Peter wants everyone to sign off on reviews and applications to keep everyone up-to-date. Additional comments about how some landowners and business owners were not caught up to date with having permits.

Bob Day's Report - Public hearing about a new building, potentially two, on Bokum road to house Essex Winair in a light industrial building. There is a piece of residential real estate that is also light industrial with a special exception to allow it to be built as a house in front of the new building(s). The result is that they are very densely packed with driveways right up to their minimum setbacks. Although concerns were brought up with the buildings, the building(s) appears to meet all zoning rules. More prospective talks about this next month. Additional comments about the sports building on Westbrook Road that requires a traffic study, primarily about traffic count not sightline. Boar's Head needs to go to speak about wetlands, but it is not a zoning hold-up. Carlson's Landing is closed for renovations this month

Upcoming Guests and Meeting Locations:

The next meeting will be March 8, 2023, at 4 p.m. at the Steam Room A & B – Witch Hazel Complex – 6 Main Street Centerbrook

ADJOURNMENT:

James Vineburgh made a motion to adjourn. Peter Decker seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Zoning Report for the Economic Development Commission

February 8, 2023 Meeting

By: Carey Duques, Land Use Official

The following applications relating to businesses have seen activity since the last submission to the Essex EDC:

The PZC held a regular meeting on February 8, 2023.

Approved Zoning Permits:

Application No. 23-10 – **23 Saybrook Essex**, approval for a new sign for Shikoba/Angela Stevens yoga and wellness studio.

Application No. 23-15 – **5 Essex Square, Essex**, approval for a sign for art studio Susan Chamberland.

Special Exception Applications:

APPROVED PZC Application 22-19 Special Exception under Section 90A.3(A) of the Essex Zoning Regulations to build 2 buildings, one 28,500 sq ft and one 21,700 sq ft, and associated building utility services and site improvements at **43 Bokum Road Essex** *Applicant/Owner: George C Field Co Inc.*

APPROVED PZC Application 22-21 Special Exception under Section 105 of the Essex Zoning Regulations to use the Steam Rooms A and B of the Witch Hazel Works for small-medium-sized events **6 Main Street, Centerbrook** *Applicant: Shannon Dolan; Owner: MacBeth Venture, LLC*

Public hearing was continued to March 7, 2023:

Modification of PZC Application 19-26 under 90A.3(E) for change of use to indoor recreational facility in a 20,000 sq ft building approved in 2019 at **83 Westbrook Road Centerbrook**. *Applicant/Owner: E.S.T. Irrevocable Trust*

PZC Application 22-23 Special Exception under Section 90. A.1, 104.D.3 of the Essex Zoning Regulations to build a 10,125 sq ft building for expansion of the existing Boar's Head business at **49 Plains Road Essex** *Applicant/Owner: Paige Management Corp.*

Site Plan Review Application:

No updates

Text Amendments and Zone Changes:

PZC Application 23-1 Text Amendment under Section 123 of the Essex Zoning Regulations to modify the sections relating to the Gateway Zone as well as add language to regulate light pollution *Applicant: CT River Gateway Commission*. **Public hearing scheduled for April 4, 2023**

Other updates: Discussions on short-term rentals planned with BOS in February and an update is going to be provided to PZC for the March meeting.

Recommended Action <u>Item</u>	Lead <u>Entity</u>	Priority
		^D I: <u>Immediate</u> and Ongoing 2: Initiate within years 1-2 of Plan 3: <u>Initiate</u> within years 2-4 of Plan 4: Initiate within years 5-7 of Plan 5: <u>Initiate</u> within years 8-10 of Plan
Work with Ivoryton Village Alliance and other partners to promote Ivoryton Center as retail and tourist destination.	Economic Development Commission	2
Work with State of Connecticut and ownership of Pratt, Read, & Co. property to explore cleanup and creative redevelopment options.	Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission	3
Work with Essex Board of Trade to identify and target business sectors that would contribute to the character and economy of Essex Village.	Economic Development Commission	2
Support efforts to expand activities at Connecticut River Museum and marinas;	Economic Development Commission	4
Continue to support and expand the use of Essex Village as a center for events such as parades, celebrations, and regional tourism festivals.	Economic Development Commission	2
Continue the Centerbrook stakeholders group to serve as a contact between businesses, residents, and future businesses.	Economic Development Commission, Planning Commission	1
Identify landmarks or iconic buildings that stand out and contribute to the identity and character of the area to establish a sense of place. Create pedestrian connections between these landmarks to encourage people to stay in Centerbrook after visiting the train or other businesses.	Economic Development Commission	2
Work with businesses, such as Cumberland Farms, to reconstruct or redesign their driveways to make a safer pedestrian walking experience.	Zoning Commission, Economic Development Commission	2
Foster community and economic growth consistent with Essex's history and promotes a more diverse and vibrant small town.	Economic Development Commission	2
Work with stakeholders in each Village area, the Economic Development Commission, and the Connecticut Main Street Center to implement streetscape elements, signage, pedestrian enhancements, active tourism/visitor promotion efforts, and business development approaches to strengthen Village character	Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, Staff	2
Develop Commercial and Mixed- Use Regulations and Design Standards to enhance and support established architectural character.	Zoning Commission	2
Promote more public access to riverfront for both active and passive recreation, and enhance pedestrian connections to mitigate traffic and parking concerns.	Economic Development Commission, Traffic Authority,	2

	Parks & Recreation	
Expand allowable uses through Zoning Regulation change to facilitate commercial, restaurant, retail, and tourism-friendly development.	Zoning Commission, Economic Development Commission	2
Support and promote the Connecticut River Museum as a hub of cultural and ecological activity.	Economic Development Commission	3
Undertake a comprehensive review and potential re-write of the Zoning Regulations to reflect the philosophical direction of this Plan and encourage appropriate type and scale of permitted land uses throughout Town.	Zoning Commission, Planning Commission	2
Encourage an active and empowered Economic Development Commission and dedicated Village Groups such as the Board of Trade, Centerbrook Vision Group, and Ivoryton Village Alliance to actively participate in village improvement projects, municipal decision-making and business recruitment and retention.	Economic Development Commission, Board of Selectmen, Planning Commission	2
<i>Continue to work with the Connecticut Main Street Center and local Economic Development experts on community improvement initiatives.</i>	<i>Economic Development Commission, Staff</i>	2
<i>Work, through the Economic Development Commission, Board of Finance, and Board of Selectmen, on the analysis of tax abatement or other incentives to encourage recruitment, retention, and expansion of targeted business sectors.</i>	<i>Staff, Board of Finance, Economic Development Commission</i>	2
<i>Support ongoing conversation between key culture and tourism assets such as Ivoryton Playhouse, Connecticut River Museum, Essex Steam Train and businesses to coordinate promotion of Essex as a destination.</i>	<i>Economic Development Commission</i>	2
<i>Support recognition and promotion of historic assets, including National Register designation for Villages, Historic Battlefield status, and historic properties.</i>	<i>Economic Development Commission, Planning Commission, Staff</i>	2
<i>Coordinate and support a full range of annual public and tourism events, including parades and festivals, which promote Essex as a vibrant and welcoming community.</i>	<i>Economic Development Commission</i>	2
<i>Explore opportunities to promote the varied talents and experience of Essex artists of all forms for the enjoyment and benefit of all.</i>	<i>Economic Development Commission, Staff</i>	2
<i>Review municipal policies and work with community groups to ensure a consistent message and policy of making Essex a diverse, vibrant, and welcoming community.</i>	<i>Economic Development Commission</i>	2