

Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting
February 1, 2023
MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Old Lyme Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, February 1, 2023.

Present: Cheryl Poirier, John Stratton, Mona Colwell, Joe Camean, Wendy Russell, Scott Smith and Jean Wilczynski. Teri Lewis attended as a member of the public.

1. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM.

Cheryl opened the meeting by welcoming newly appointed Commissioner Scott Smith. She congratulated Joe Camean on his reappointment for another 5 years. She stated that Scott and Joe have not yet been officially sworn in by the Town Clerk so they will not be voting tonight.

2. Approval of January 4, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Mona Cowell made a motion to approve the January 4, 2023 regular meeting minutes. Jean Wilczynski seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5 (Poirier/Stratton/Colwell/Russell/Wilczynski) in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining and 2 (Camean/Smith) non-voting.

3. Appointments

Cheryl stated that there is still one open seat for the Commission.

4. Economic Indicators

a. Real Estate Update

MJ was not in attendance so Cheryl stated that the real estate update will be postponed until next month.

b. Business Openings and Closings

New Liquor Store in the plaza near Point of Woods Entrance: No observed activity yet although approved by the Zoning Commission.

Sapore Pizzeria: Sapore recently had a fire which has closed them down for an expected four months. Cheryl reached out to them on behalf of the EDC and shared the EDC will support their reopening with a ribbon cutting or other appropriate activity. She also shared with them information regarding local social service departments and agencies for furloughed employees residing in various local towns including Old Lyme. Cheryl looked into grant opportunities at the State level but found only loan programs.

Cheryl also reported being contacted through Facebook by a town resident who requested the EDC's help in promoting a "Go Fund Me" online fundraiser for Sapore staff. The Town of Old Lyme does not actively promote private fundraising efforts. She stated that the resident was unhappy with her response.

Papi's Taqueria Ribbon Cutting: Papi's is now open and appears quite busy. The restaurant is currently cash only. They stated that they are happy to have a ribbon cutting but since they have been so busy, pushing the date out some would be advantageous, perhaps Saturday March 4th. Cheryl to follow up.

5. Marketing & Promotion

a. Eastern Regional Tourism District (ERTD) Update

Wendy stated that the ERTD has been attending travel and tourism shows. She stated that the EDC can give them tourism ideas to promote.

Wendy advised the Commission about a grant that the ERTD is funding. The ERTD will match money for the grant for any businesses, towns or non-profits up to \$10,000 that promotes tourism of some sort within the state. The grant deadline is February 10th.

The Commission discussed the grant. The EDC would have to get approval from the Board of Selectman to apply. The Commission discussed approaching the Board of Selectman for permission to pursue the grant next time the cycle comes up.

Mona suggested sending the grant information out to Old Lyme businesses.

Joe spoke about a bike/kayak trail idea pursued years ago and stopped due to lack of additional funding. Cheryl stated the ERTD grant may not be right for that project, but perhaps the EDC should look into creating literature to promote eco-tourism targeted marketing.

Cheryl also stated the EDC has carryover budget for its strategic planning process, as well as reprints of existing brochures and new ARPA funds for marketing. Focusing on completing these projects should be discussed in the next meeting.

b. Explore Old Lyme

One new page that can be added to the website is an eco/green-community life page for choosing to live here. Cheryl will speak with the Recycling Committee about the chance to highlight the town's increasing recycling efforts, and then link to the pages on outdoor recreation and other nature-related content.

c. Communications/Building a mailing list

The Commission discussed the email list they currently have stating the list has a lot of bounce backs. The current list was compiled from four different places LOL Chamber list, arts district list, real estate listing and old EDC list. Mona took all the lists and merged them and tried to find as many other missing businesses as possible.

The Commission discussed ways to build the mailing list. They want to be able to communicate with businesses on a quarterly basis etc.

Mona suggested reaching out to the businesses to let them know to start thinking about mid-summer festival now and give them the grant information.

6. Economic Revitalization Efforts

a. Shoreline Gateway Committee

Joe stated that the Shoreline Gateway met on January 19th. He stated that the Committee has requested \$45,000 for funding for the coming year.

Joe stated at the last meeting that they discussed blight ordinances. The topics of discussion was what do other towns do, who would enforce it, and more. He stated that the town currently has ordinances but they are disheveled. Joe stated that he reviewed them and took the effort to re-write them and send them to Martha.

Joe stated they also spoke about dark skies and light ordinances. He stated there are a couple people in town who are very interested in Dark Skies. Light can bring two elements, one being annoyance to neighbors and two, birds get lost.

Cheryl said there was a blight ordinance draft that was done a couple years ago. She stated that it wasn't approved because it involved hiring a blight officer which would need town funding. She told Joe that the Town Clerk might have copies of the draft ordinance.

Joe stated that the group reviewed the executive summaries of the townwide survey and that Martha and Matt will summarize them all into one executive summary.

Joe stated he believes that the Sound View Village should have a year round presence and he thinks an ice rink would be beneficial to the winter season and possibly more. He stated that two residents of Old Lyme operate the one in Windsor.

Joe said the Shoreline Gateway will be meeting again in February.

b. Halls Road

Cheryl stated that the Halls Road Committee went before the Zoning Commission back in January. The meeting went past midnight and much of the voting was postponed until the next meeting. The Zoning Commission will be voting at the February 13th meeting on the Halls Road Overlay District.

7. New or Additional Business

Jean stated that the Chamber of Commerce met and continued its discussion of what the future might be for the Lyme/Old Lyme Chamber. She stated that the primary idea that came out of the meeting was to rely more heavily on the Old Saybrook Chamber. She stated that the Old Saybrook Chamber of Commerce is rebranding itself to the Greater Old Saybrook Chamber. She attended the monthly luncheon that the Old Saybrook Chamber puts on and spoke with the director of the chamber who stated that about 30 percent of members are businesses outside of Old Saybrook. Jean stated that the

L-OL Chamber is exploring that as possibility but also still looking at other options. She said that it's difficult to run the LOL Chamber as an all-volunteer group. Jean stated that the LOL Chamber will still be doing their scholarship this year.

Cheryl advised the Commission that she will be sending out River COG's draft comprehensive economic development strategy to review.

The Commission spoke about the Midsummer festival, which will be July 29, 2023, and how the EDC should start planning for it now. They discussed reaching out to different businesses in town to get pamphlets or info cards to give out at the table. Mona suggested that Halls Road businesses should take advantage of increased traffic and offer coupons, specials etc. Cheryl asked Mona to draft up something to send out to businesses. Mona agreed.

Joe shared article regarding the new Connecticut Economic Development Chief. (CT Mirror) which led to a discussion of economic development in Connecticut.

8. Public Comment

Teri Lewis introduced herself as an Old Lyme resident interested in the Economic Development Commission and shared her background.

9. Adjournment

Mona Colwell made a motion to adjourn. Jean Wilczynski seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5 (Poirier/Stratton/Colwell/Russell/Wilczynski) in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining and 2 (Camean/Smith) non-voting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:39 PM.

Draft Respectfully submitted by: Jennifer D'Amato
Records Clerk for the Old Lyme Economic Development Commission
With editing by Chair Cheryl Poirier