



City of Groton
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION & TIF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

April 7th 2021

5:30PM - 7:00PM

Agenda:

- I. Call to Order @ 5:34pm**
 - a) Present: Jason Rusk (Chairman), Annemarie Seifert, Nishant Sahoo, Margaret Hirsch, Cheryl Auerbach
 - b) Liaison: Tina Daniels & Stephen Sheffield
 - c) Staff: Cierra Patrick & Leslie Creane
- II. Introduction**
- III. Minutes Approval**
 - a) March 3rd 2021
 - Motion to accept the minutes of March 3rd 2021
 - Motion: Jason Rusk
 - Second: Cheryl Auerbach
 - Decision: 4- 0- 0
- IV. New Business**
- V. Old Business**
 - a) EDC Working Groups
 - Coastal Vulnerability
 - Pedestrian & Bicycle Network Assessment
 - Thames Center Planning
 - Thames Center Programming
 - b) Staff Report:

- Project Status
 - Pedestrian & Bicycle Network Assessment
 - Resiliency & Hazard Mitigation
 - Community Resiliency Building Workshop, tentatively scheduled for June 8th & 9th 4:00-7:00 pm, is a deep dive into the to 2019 Workshop results. SLR is hosting the workshops virtually offering roughly 40 active participants and options for the general public to engage.
 - Strategic Communications
 - Staff and consultant are currently developing brand standards and are preparing for a mid-April launch of the 1st digital newsletter issue.
 - Visioning Thames Street
 - Thames View Park Improvements
 - Riverwalk (Coast Guard Academy Capstone Project)
 - Cadets presented their project to City Council on April 5th 2021, Councilors asked engaging questions around the origin of the project idea, the connection of community assets, and thought process behind designing concept plans.
 - The Groton Riverwalk survey received over 170 response. Staff noted common mentions including sidewalks, crosswalk, making the area more pedestrian safe/ friendly; interest in developing a water pathway, addressing blight and parking concerns, general maintenance and ordinances. The chair requested a PDF version of the results be shared with the Commission. The Thames Street Planning Working Group will conduct a deep dive of the survey results.
- Tax Increment Financing District
- Projects in the City
 - City Planner, Leslie Creane, join the meeting to discuss the Mixed-Use Design District, an instrumental zoning tool in the ongoing 5 Corners Development.
 - Leslie began with a “Western Civilization” history review on why and how cities have developed. It is important community members develop an understanding of why and how Cities, specifically the City of Groton, are developed and staff plans/ process to move forward.
 - Lessons learned when asked: How do people live together? What physical elements went where? We find vary configurations around the world providing us centuries of data about human behavior and settlement patterns. Historically cities where built, providing humans close proximity to their everyday needs and activity. Great early examples are walled cities. These cities were developed as densely populated,

compacted areas with uses stacked on top one another and agriculture placed on the outskirts of the walls. As society evolved practitioners assessed the public health, safe, and welfare of this type of development and began exploring the separation of uses. The separation of uses later became institutionalized and helped usher in the separation of people, often by income and race.

- Lessons from transportation development: For example, Trolley's and their infrastructure. Take a community's focal point, say a transportation stop, public assets, or local employer and draw a .25-.5 mile radius around said focal point. Within that radius (circle) a community can identify neighborhood characteristics and human scale elements that can be used to establish a sense of place, encourage use/access of existing or new assets, and educate on navigation of transportations options to and from said neighborhood.
- A lot of ideas and plans are borne from the best of intentions. For instance, after WWII, the planning practice applied tools that addressed auto dependent uses, sprawl, and an inward thinking approach to building communities by strengthen neighborhoods. Looking at the patterns of natural human behavior, and why specific areas configured the way they are. We're now in a foundational space for creating neighborhoods and establishing identities.
- Where do people want to be? Draw a half mile radius from this point and ask yourself who are you capturing in this neighborhood?
- For example, Five Corners, a half mile radius would encompass Electric Boat as an anchor (employer). We knew that people are willing to walk about quarter mile from EB. What other spaces are within this radius and how can we make these spaces feel like part of a whole?
- In regards to the Five Corners Development project. Staff posed the following questions:
 - How does the City of Groton use the Five Corners MUDD proposal and build from it?
 - How can we encourage private investment and make public investments in an areas that would have a wide ranging positive private market reaction?
 - If we do nothing else, we should do what?
- Staff noted that The City of Groton is ripe for revitalization and the establishment of a new economic hub around the blue economy.

- The Commission asked whether this model of rezoning (a floating zone) was necessary or if a traditional approach that could have been used.
 - Staff is actively reviewing the City's zoning regulations. And will follow-up with next steps. There are many tools in the toolbox. As a community we must first ask ourselves what we're looking to accomplish. The zoning regulations, authorize PZC to regulate the form of buildings.
 - Floating zones are is not an abnormal tool. In the City, the Mixed-Use Design District can only be used in the Five Corners or Waterfront Business Residence District
 - In the case of Five Corners, increased density can be supported. However, how does the City make the design work on a human scale and aesthetically pleasing
 - The Role of the EDC is to encourage public participation in Community Engagements, assist staff with planning and execution of community outreach, and advocate the shared vision and plans developed from said outreach to inform public investment.
- How will the Five Corners MUDD drive future development?
- Staff expressed that this particular project is an important initiator to inspire other developers to invest in the City of Groton. Staffs approach is to support development that builds one another causing a dominion effect of investment for the area. As a community we are challenged to design the community/ neighborhood in a way that where the buildings and elements feel as though they belong together.

VI. Additions to Agenda

VII. Public Comments

- a) Councilman Sheffield provided a follow-up of the Notional League of Cities conference. Mr. Sheffield highlighted:
 - American Rescue Plan funding for community needs and economic development. This is federal funding available to municipalities.
 - Fiscal alterity: Mark Zandi, Chief Economist of Moody's Analytics, discussed getting federal money to municipalities with a goal to assist the development of local programs to maintain fiscal stability and health for the sustainable local economies.
 - Staff noted that fiscal responsibility across local and state levels is a great attractor of business and investment to the area.
 - Broadband: improving internet affordability and access. How does the City's EDC play a role in this?
 - Staff expressed that although broadband is not a focal point of the commission at this current moment, the Planning and Economic Development Department is willing to support and collaborate with Groton Utilities, Thames Valley

Communication, and Atlantic Broadband in assessing and planning the best course of action for the City.

- Does the City of Groton have a baseline assessment of where we currently are and assessing what gap needs to be filled?
 - Not at this time that staff is aware of.

- Vaccination Education

VIII. Adjournment

Jason Rusk moved to adjourn

Cheryl Auerbach seconded the motion

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM

Submitted by Cierra Patrick