



Wednesday, September 6th | 5:30 PM **Minutes**

Chairman Nishant Sahoo, Secretary Matthew Longino, Commissioner Margaret Hirsch, Commissioner Jason Rusk, Commissioner Cameron James, Commissioner Fallyn Fonville-Smith, Councilor Paul Norris, Groton Utilities Business Development Manager Aaron Brooks, and Economic Development Manager Cierra Patrick

I. ROLL CALL: 5:34PM

- a. Commissioners: Nishant Sahoo (Chair), Cameron James, Fallyn Fonville-Smith, and Margaret Hirsch
- b. Liaisons: None
- c. Staff: Cierra Patrick
- d. Presenter/ Guest: None

II. INTRODUCTIONS

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Motion to approve minutes of August 2nd 2023
 - i. Motion made by Nishant Sahoo
 - ii. Seconded by Cameron James
 - iii. Decision: 4-0-0

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS ~ 3 MINUTES PER PERSON

V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. 2024 Meeting Calendar
 - i. Motion to that the Economic Development Commission's regular meetings be held on the first Wednesday of every month from 5:30-7:00pm in Council Chambers; Meetings on the following dates will be cancelled: January 3rd; July 3rd, and November 6th. Special meeting will be scheduled as needed.
 1. Motion made by Margaret Hirsch
 2. Seconded by Nishant Sahoo
 3. Decision: 4-0-0



VI. OLD BUSINESS

a. Business Outreach Update from Commissioners

- i. Nishant Sahoo spoke with Ally on the Thames regarding the ribbon cutting planning for late September or early October.
- ii. Margaret Hirsch has been working with Buford's Family Restaurant to complete the Minor Façade Improvement Grant process; Margaret attended the August 28th Committee of the Whole to represent the business and share their experience with the grant program.
- iii. Matthew Longino, emailed staff, he was able to connect with the Eastern Point Wine & Spirits, Bridge Package Store, and Hilltop Wine & Spirits about the September 9th 2023 Brew Run. A list of the participating breweries was shared and stores have stocked up on supplies.

~~b. Groton Utilities Update~~

c. Economic Development Grant Program

i. Application Submissions:

1. Add on: Buford's Family Restaurant's reimbursement request was approved at the September 5th Mayor and Council meeting. Next steps include scheduling a time for the Mayor and EDC Chair to present the award and take a photo. October Newsletter Spotlight; and Facebook post.
 - a. Commission agrees to give Buford's their reimburse check as soon as possible and scheduling a photo in line with the ribbon cutting for Alley on the Thames.
2. Add on: The Day is following the impact of the Minor Façade Improvement Grant Program and may reach out the Commissioners for comments. Commissioners indicated they are fine with this outreach.
3. CJ's Laundromat



- a. Located at 140 Poquonnock Rd. Is requesting a \$2500.00 reimbursement for an awning that includes the business name. The total cost of the project was \$3934.95. The applicant has meet all submission requirements.
 - b. Commissioners noted the amount of energy savings the business will get with the installation of an awning.
 - c. Motion that CJ's Laundromat's Minor Façade Improvement program meets the application eligibility, the project aligns with program goals, and recommends a \$2500.00 reimbursement for the new awning.
 - i. Motion made by Nishant Sahoo
 - ii. Seconded by Fallyn Fonville-Smith
 - iii. Decision: 4-0-0
4. Barking Pumpkins LLC
- a. Located at 126-128 Poquonnock Rd. Is requesting a \$2500.00 reimbursement for the façade siding. Please note the business replace the entire property siding for a total of \$26,200.00. The Façade portion of the project cost \$3888.00. The applicant has two outstanding requirements:
 - i. Proof of payment
 - ii. Building Permit: the certificate of approval for permit# 23-148B is pending; a 2'x 4' ft. section in the back of the property is unfinished while the applicant awaits new meter equipment to be installed. The façade portion of the project is complete.



- iii. Commission agrees on waiting for the final inspection from the building Inspector and proof of payment before proceeding.
- ii. Policy & Procedures Edits
 1. Staffs goal is to have revisions completed by the November regular meeting.
 2. Edits Discussed:
 - a. Should this program be a matching grant? If so, to what extent?
 - i. Staff noted the EDC has received one application where the reimbursement covered the exact cost of the project; one application that was under the \$2500.00 limit; and two application who cost exceeded the \$2500.00 reimbursement limit.
 - ii. Commission would like to see buy in from the applicant. Would a 25% match be appropriate?
 - iii. A concern of barriers to participate. Would applicants still be willing to participate?
 - iv. Would this add an addition step to the process?
 - v. What impact would this have on smaller projects
 - vi. Commissioners will do some outreach: “What is the tipping point for participation in this program if a match is required? Perspective of past and current applicants.
 - b. Should the process/ steps to complete the application process be reevaluated? Feedback from applicants has indicated a concern with the amount of steps.
 - c. Should we change the definition of Façade:
 - i. Riverfront’s awning was the example. The awning is located on the side of the building but clearly visible from the public right of way.
 - ii. Proposed language “The portion of the building viewable from the public right of way”



- d. In regards to the Business soft cost program, should Ledge Light Health district permits be included?
 - i. The program currently doesn't pay any fees to a government/ public entities. The Commission agrees to keep this but would like to clarify the language.
 - ii. Proposed language "Grant does not cover municipal and/ or government entities"
- e. Should the boundaries of the Minor Façade Program be expanded City wide?
 - i. Currently the program only covers the TIF District. Commission agrees the program should be eligible to businesses located in the City of Groton
 - ii. Proposed language "Property must be located in the City of Groton"
- f. Should minor façade improvements to be permeant?
For example landscaping plants annual vs. perennials
 - i. Depends on the scope of the landscaping, Applicants are highly encouraged to reach out to staff prior to the start of a project they are seeking reimbursement for
 - ii. Commission agrees annual plants would not be eligible under this program.
 - iii. Proposed language " (only perennials and shrubs will be considered for reimbursement)"
- g. How should we deal with assumptions / expectations applicant may have in regards to the program?



- i. There is a bolded “Please Note” section that includes this information. Clarify language.
 - ii. Proposed language “Applicants are highly encouraged to contact/ meet with staff prior to the start of a project their considering applying for reimbursement.
 - iii. EDC should host an grant information sessions to learn more about the programs
 - h. Requiring attendance at a Committee of the Whole meeting.
 - i. Not all applicants are available to attend the meeting.
 - ii. Proposed language “owner or appropriate representative” (Section 7; Bullet c.)
 - i. Should we change the timeframe of work completed prior to application submission from 6 months to the fiscal year or 3 months?
 - j. We should clarify the type of insurance (certificate or policy) required
 - i. What if something happens as a result of the project the City has provided a reimbursement for?
 - ii. Is it enough for applicants to provide proof of a insurance policy for the property and/or business?

VII. Programming

- a. Ally on the Thames Ribbon Cutting Planning
 - i. Staff will work on scheduling a ribbon cutting for early-mid October. The EDC will provide light refreshments, ribbon and larger scissors, a certificate, and coordination with the Mayor’s Office and Senator



Summers to speak. Commission is hoping this will help trigger more interest with other businesses.

- ii. The Commission would like staff to schedule a photo with Buford's Family Restaurant for their Minor Façade Improvement award the same day of the ribbon cutting at Ally on the Thames.

b. Brew Run bag stuffing of Business Postcards

- i. Staff and Fallyn Fonville-Smith stuffed the Brew Run bags with the Business Postcards the EDC prepared and Parks & Recs/ Par4 Coupons.

VIII. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

IX. ADJOURNMENT

- a. Nishant Sahoo moved to adjourn meeting
- b. Cameron James seconded
- c. Meeting adjourned at 6:40pm

Submitted by: Cierra Patrick