

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

May 2016

The following documents economic development activities in May 2016.

Administration:

- OPDS Budget: The OPDS budget request gained approval from the RTM. This includes zoning/subdivision rewrites, new Economic Development website, community signage programming, and funding for marketing/promotions and municipal property redevelopment. OPDS sincerely appreciates the direct and active support offered by EDC members in getting this budget request approved by the Town Council and RTM.

Economic Development Efforts:

- Zoning Audit and Market Analysis: The final deliverable has been provided and staff is conducting our final review to ensure comments are addressed. A presentation of the highlights to the Town Council is anticipated in June.
- Great Blue Survey: Staff met with Great Blue Research, a Connecticut analytical company, to kickoff the project involving a survey instrument to gauge consumer and business sentiment. The results will complement the market analysis data. EDC members will be asked for input with the question development phase in June.
- Mystic Education Center (a.k.a. Mystic Oral School): Still awaiting funding and promotional collaborative agreement with the state. A \$50,000 request award is anticipated any day and contract documentation is being drafted.
- Airport Development Zone: Staff met with the CT Economic Resource Center (CERC) to coordinating the development of the ADZ application. development. Staff is completing the mapping, plan review, and build-out assumptions for the ADZ application process. CERC is coordinating with DECD and initiating the required economic analysis (job and business growth). Submittal to DECD for review is planned this summer.
- Electric Plug in Vehicle Program: Staff completed the coordination of the EV grant program including the purchase of a Nissan Leaf and installation of charging stations at the Town Hall, Library/Senior Center, and Town Hall Annex. These stations are up and running and free to the public. The Nissan Leaf is used by the OPDS Department staff. The stations help to brand Groton's image for Groton and they will appear on mobile applications for visitor use. A press release and news story will be coordinated shortly.
- Incentives: Staff continues to develop an easy-to-use document to help with business inquiries. Content has been in the works and now a format has been targeted.
- Economic Assistance Fund: Staff and the EDC Subcommittee met on Tuesday, May 24th to address amending the program. Staff completed review of applications for two existing local businesses.

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- “Doing Business in Groton Guide”: The product is ongoing and has evolved from a simple welcome package. The Guide will focus on helping walk business through the process of starting and expanding business in Groton.
- Mystic Visitors Information Kiosk and “Pop Up Shop”: The opportunity did not solidify with the property owner for using the vacant storefront for the 2016 summer season.
- Thames River Heritage Park (TRHP): Staff serves on the TRHP Transition Team. Final preparations are being made for a June 10th water taxi launch.
- I-95 Signage: CTDOT is replacing all signs on I-95 from New London to the RI border valued at about \$9 million. Staff has been active on this project specific to Exit 89 (Allyn Street). The Town Council initially voted to support signage as a result of business support, but then reversed the decision a week later due to residential opposition. Written comments were drafted and provided to CTDOT regarding the entire sign program.
- Community Signage: Staff has secured the funding and the project description, photos, and future RFP language is in process of being developed for the wayfinding and gateway signage.

Meetings/Outreach:

- Staff participated in meetings/conversations with partner agencies including CT Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), CTDOT, seCTer, CERC, Eastern CT Chamber, Greater Mystic Chamber, and the Groton Business Association. Notable meetings involved assisting the Greater Mystic Chamber with organizational planning, DECD with Enterprise Zone Coordinators get together (May 11), and Shoreline East Rail coordination (May 18), and CEDAS local community marketing (May 12).
- Staff interaction with new and existing businesses is significant and growing. There were about 35 recorded inquiries and communications with business prospects in May. As a highlight, one interest pertains to further redevelopment and addition of a tenant in the downtown Groton area.