

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

April 2020

The following summarizes Economic Development Division activities for April 2020.

Additional news specific to Groton Economic Development is found here:

<http://www.exploremoregroton.com/news-and-media/news>

Economic Development Activities:

- COVID-19 (General Response): Staff allocated all of April proactively responding to COVID-19. This entailed daily briefings with federal, state, regional, non-profit, economic development trade organizations and local. Statewide, there have been many different municipal approaches ranging from widespread blog download to local narrative interpretation to virtually nothing. Groton staff's strategy and actions focused on distilling and relaying timely information in a clear, accurate, and concise manner. Groton staff received numerous inquiries from other municipalities on our targeted efforts. The April website metrics (at end of report) illustrate a sharp spike in website sessions (up 88%) primarily due COVID-19 business information needs.
- COVID-19 Business Resources: Staff participated in regular updates with the Governor, DECD, SBA, SBDC, IEDC, ICSC, CEDAS, seCTer, banks, and federal/state legislators. Although federal resources were being approved through CARES Act provisions, there was significant confusion and delay in distributing funds to small business needs. This is particularly true with the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and CT Bridge Loan program. Staff built a dedicated COVID-19 Business Assistance web page on which daily updates were made including primary source data and hyperlinks to ensure real time information updates and to avoid errors in paraphrasing. <https://bit.ly/GrotonBizRecovery> Social media sources were also used to most quickly disseminate critical information.
- COVID-19 Restaurant Promotions: Staff immediately began documenting restaurants that closed and more importantly, knowing which ones are open. Open restaurants were promoted on our website including name, hours of operation, phone, website, social media, and any other special information. <https://bit.ly/GrotonEats> As of this report, there were over 50 restaurants listed. Additional restaurants can be added by contacting Lauren Post at lpost@groton-ct.gov. Staff also borrowed an idea from Berlin, CT and launched an "Eat Local, Win Local" promotion intended to help existing, open restaurants. Gross receipts have been significantly reduced at most standard restaurants that had not previously relied on "take out" service. This promotion complimented staff's efforts to publicize the open restaurants and to also increase sales by patronizing local operations. Social media and online responses to this program and the restaurant listings were highly positive.
<https://www.theday.com/article/20200415/NWS01/200419661>
- COVID-19 Business Survey: Staff conducted a digital survey from April 9-21 asking business owners and operators about experienced COVID-19 impacts and how they were responding. The purpose was to help Groton target issues, needs, future direction and resources. The survey was promoted via an e-mail to commercial tax payers as well as through social media. There

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were 71 respondents to the survey. A summary of the findings can be found at <https://www.exploremoregroton.com/doing-business/covid19-business-survey>. Key findings of the survey are as follows:

- 49 percent of businesses responding had closed temporarily at the time of the survey
 - 73 percent of businesses responding indicated that cash loans or grants were critical to their recovery
 - More than half the businesses surveyed planned to take advantage of the Small Business Administration's Payroll Protection Program (SBA – PPP)
 - Nearly 60 percent of businesses surveyed expect to close permanently if they cannot re-open by July
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- PCC Structurals LLC: Staff was advised of 71 layoffs at PCC Structurals LLC in April. The cause is related to the aerospace industry downturn nationwide. Staff reached out to PCC Structurals offering assistance when industry conditions improve and the Groton site is poised for rehiring. The facility remains open, but at reduced staffing capacity.
<https://www.theday.com/article/20200423/BIZ02/200429730>
 - Bond Rating Reviews: Staff participated in preparing for Groton's bond rating agency reviews. Documentation was prepared for the three calls with S+P Global, Moody's, and Fitch. Although the municipal sector is under financial pressures, all three bond rating agencies upheld Groton's rating due to strong financial management practices and economic growth projections.

Public Property Redevelopment:

- Public Property Redevelopment (Mystic Education Center): Staff and Respler Homes continue to coordinate weekly. The project name is officially "Mystic River Bluffs" and a website has been launched <https://resplerhomes.com/mystic-river-bluffs/>. Coursey & Company, serves as the Respler's project outreach coordinator. The public is encouraged to reach out to Coursey with questions. Greenplay, the town's recreation consultant, has been advancing their review of the Pratt Building for a public indoor recreation facility and also in conducting community-wide recreation assessments. Staff and the P&Z Commission have been meeting to discuss the conceptual framework for future zoning at the MEC property. Draft zoning language will be developed in April for P&Z Commission consideration. Fuss & O'Neil, Respler's engineering contractor, has begun refining design and engineering concepts for the site including reviews for building location, utility upgrades and roads/infrastructure. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) discussions have also advanced with focus on a future needed TIF Master Plan. Environmental testing on the property has been ongoing to determine actual contaminants on site beyond the initial phase environmental analyses. Most of 2020 will be used to complete the planning, design, engineering, permitting, and programming for the Mystic Education Center property. Groundbreaking for Phase I is envisioned in 2021 entailing the adaptive reuse of all existing

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buildings plus installation of needed infrastructure. Subsequent development, primarily residential construction, is planned for Phase II.

- Public Property Redevelopment (Groton Heights): Staff still awaiting ThayerMahan's final comments on the town's Purchase and Sales (P&S) agreement and the DECD Brownfields grant agreement.
- Public Property Redevelopment (517/529 Gold Star Highway): Staff has been advised by the development team holding the town's land option that project plans and designs are being advanced. The project will entail the development of approximately 300 apartments on 17.75 acres.
- Public Property Redevelopment (Seely School): OPDS staff forwarded the P&S agreement to the Town Council for consideration to advance the "Trinity Square" redevelopment project. Don Mar Development Corporation proposes a 280-unit multi-family apartment development rich in amenities. Targeted future tenants are young professionals and "empty-nesters." Pre-development work on site is anticipated this spring. See related story: <https://ctexaminer.com/2020/04/16/groton-council-approves-purchase-agreement-for-former-seely-school-as-town-moves-to-redevelop-public-properties/>
- Public Property Redevelopment (Colonel Ledyard School): Town and City staff completed second round interviews. The Review Panel agreed on recommending a "preferred developer." Discussions with such developer are ongoing.
- Public Property Redevelopment (Pleasant Valley School): Staff continued showing the property to developer interests and fielding questions about the property. Marketing efforts are ongoing. The RFP issuance has been delayed due to COVID-19 and will likely be summer.

Economic Development Metrics:

Trade Name Metrics:

- There were 2 trade name certificates this month in the Town of Groton. Likely impacted by Town Hall closed to the public.

Social Media Metrics:

- 573 Facebook followers, 10 percent increase from last month
** Please follow the Facebook page and share our posts to your network:
<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonEconomicDevelopment/>
- 61 LinkedIn page followers, up 1%
** Please follow the LinkedIn page and share our posts to your network:
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/groton-economic-development/>
** Please like and SHARE posts on social media to expand the reach!

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Website Metrics: (March 30 – April 28) www.exploremoregroton.com

- Total Sessions: 3,192 (2,522 new/670 returning), up 88% from last month
- Pages per session: 1.52, down 8%
- Total Page Views: 4,852, up 73%
- Average Time Duration: 1 min 17 seconds, decrease 5%

Note: Increases in website visits are largely due to the promotion of the newly-created COVID-19 Disaster Assistance and Restaurant Update pages.

- 572 subscribers on the Newsletter Mailing List, 10% increase
Email addresses collected from meetings and events are added to the mailing list.
(<http://www.exploremoregroton.com/groton/news-and-media/sign-up-for-our-newsletter>)

Key Property Development Updates:

- Herbology is doing a small interior remodel based on state requirements
- Chipotle – Construction continues, exterior building and façade is far along
- Oyster Club – permit was submitted for second floor
- Chelsea Groton – 2 Water Street - interior renovations
- Groton Townhouse – Small interior renovations
- 800 Flanders – Building 13 has been completed and is beginning to be occupied.

Upcoming Meetings of Interest and Key Dates:

- T.B.D.

Keep up to date on town meetings including agendas, minutes etc. by visiting the Calendar on the town's website here: <http://www.agendasuite.org/iip/groton>

Click here for events going on around Groton: <https://www.exploremoregroton.com/events/?v=list>

Keep up to date on news pertaining to Groton & Economic Development by going to the website here: <http://www.exploremoregroton.com/news-and-media/news>