

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

JULY 2020

The following summarizes Economic Development Division activities for July 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 continued to focus on the COVID-19 business response. The Business Assistance web page <https://bit.ly/GrotonBizRecovery> is updated weekly. This webpage provides the latest relevant resource information. Social media sources are also used. In addition, staff procured 1,000 COVID masks with the ExploreMoreGroton logo for business and patron use. These will be distributed in early August. Staff and EDC collaborated to work on consistent business sign designs for Groton and Mystic. Staff provided a status update to the Town Council on Tuesday, July 28th regarding COVID business impacts. Highlights of latest presented findings are below (Naviretail). Groton learned that seCTer will receive significant EDA funding for local business loan programming and support. Staff will coordinate with seCTer.
- **Naviretail Local Business Analysis:** Groton partnered with Naviretail, a retail analytical firm to directly contact existing Groton businesses in four phases (early summer, late summer, fall and post-holiday). Goal is to track retail impact trends from COVID-19 and compare with pre-COVID baseline consumer information. Survey period was June 1-12 including first direct phone survey effort to Groton businesses. 373 businesses answered phone inquiry, 42 declined to answer, 28 referred to corporate. Businesses impacted the most: Fitness Centers, Salons, Lodging, Sole Proprietors, Apparel Stores. Nearly half of immediate store closures were small businesses with annual revenues below \$500K. Peak of business closures was March 15th correlating to government orders. Retail revenues dropped 29% from March to April. 28% of businesses who applied for federal funds were rejected. 14% of businesses expressed concern regarding PPE (supply and cost).

Recommendations include: online presence critical, cross-promotional business campaign will help, consistent safety instructions/signage with branding, business directory online, and provide business PPE. **Next Naviretail survey will occur the week of August 10th. Staff encourages business participation.** Anticipating responses showing bottoming out in April and slight improvement in summer.

- **Marketing:** Staff coordinated with *Business in Focus* magazine to release the Groton spotlighted article. The PDF is attached to this report. Staff has finalized the school and educational marketing materials.
- **Wayfinding Sign Master Plan Implementation:** Staff submitted the grant proposal to the Groton Rotary for some funding to begin implementing Phase I of the project. Also, the Mystic Rotary is entertaining a request for funding too. Groton has allocated \$50,000 towards initial wayfinding

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

JULY 2020

sign implementation, but additional funding is required. Groton's consultant, BETA, will meet with our group August 19th to jumpstart the implementation phase.

Public Property Redevelopment:

- Public Property Redevelopment (Mystic Education Center): The "Mystic River Bluffs" project is advancing. See the link for more project information <https://resplerhomes.com/mystic-river-bluffs/>. The largest focus recently has been on the zoning draft. This draft will be presented to the P&Z Commission late August or early September. Financing options are a focus including taxation and Tax Increment Financing. Groton's recreational consultant, Greenplay, completed the community wide recreational need survey and is providing results to staff. Respler is providing the results of the engineering analysis for the Pratt Building to staff. Fuss & O'Neil, Respler's engineering contractor, has begun refining design and engineering concepts for the site. 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 starting with the adaptive reuse of all existing buildings plus installation of needed infrastructure. Subsequent development, primarily residential construction, is planned for Phase II.
- Public Property Redevelopment (Groton Heights): The Purchase and Sales (P&S) agreement and the DECD Brownfields grant agreement are still pending. Post-COVID, there should be movement on this effort in the fall 2020. ThayerMahan has grown from three to over 50 employees in three years. They are committed to the project in making this their future world headquarters.
- Public Property Redevelopment (517/529 Gold Star Highway): The project envisions the development of approximately 300 apartments on 17.75 acres.
- Public Property Redevelopment (Seely School): The "Triton Square" redevelopment project is advancing. Draft site plans are being shared for viewing prior to formal submittal. Don Mar Development Corporation will construct a 280-unit multi-family apartment development with amenities. Targeted future tenants are young professionals and "empty-nesters." Pre-development work ongoing. See this project page. <https://www.seelyschool.com/>
- Public Property Redevelopment (Colonel Ledyard School): The preferred developer was introduced to the Town Council on July 7th in Executive Session. Next steps are for a future public meeting at which next steps and direction will be addressed.
- Public Property Redevelopment (Pleasant Valley School): The RFP is being finalized now. It will be issued later in late August. There has been interest in the property and staff anticipates decent proposals.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

JULY 2020

Economic Development Metrics:

Trade Name Metrics:

- There were 11 trade name certificates this month in the Town of Groton.

Social Media Metrics:

- 599 Facebook followers, negligible change from last month
** Please follow the Facebook page and share our posts to your network:
<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonEconomicDevelopment/>
- 65 LinkedIn page followers, 5% increase
** 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!

Website Metrics: (June 1 – June 30) www.exploremoregroton.com

- Total Sessions: 1,328 (1,135 new/193 returning), decrease 17 percent from last month
- Pages per session: 1.72, decrease 1 pct.
- Total Page Views: 2,284, decrease 18 pct.
- Average Time Duration: 1 min 16 seconds, increase 12 pct.
- ** Note, overall website activity has decreased as the frequency of COVID-19 related news updates and state guidelines has reduced.
- 460 subscribers on the Newsletter Mailing List, negligible change
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 at 79 Gold Star Highway opened. Staff attended the ribbon cutting. They have just hired about 25 workers.
- Chipotle Restaurant on Route 12 is finalizing and will be opening later in July.
- Jersey Mike's will open on Route 12 in July.
- 15 Fort Hill is in process of being sold for a future small mixed use redevelopment project.

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>