

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

JUNE 2020

The following summarizes Economic Development Division activities for June 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 with emphasis on the CT June 17<sup>th</sup> reopening guidance for restaurants, movie theaters, gyms and hotels. Staff continued to use the Business Assistance web page <https://bit.ly/GrotonBizRecovery>. This webpage is updated several times weekly providing the latest relevant resource information. Social media sources were also used to most quickly disseminate key information.
- COVID-19 Miranda Creative Marketing: Staff and Miranda Creative held a June 15<sup>th</sup> marketing Zoom meeting for small businesses. Maria Miranda addressed the sociology of the COVID response, how to transition and pivot, and offered top tips for business. The UTube video can be found at this link. <https://www.exploremoregroton.com/doing-business/disaster-assistance>
- Naviretail Local Business Analysis: Groton has partnered with Naviretail, a retail analytical firm, to directly contact a large sample of existing Groton businesses. The goal is to track retail impact trends from COVID-19 and compare with pre-COVID baseline consumer information. The first phase has been completed. Three more phases will be conducted through 2020 and the holiday season. Details from Phase I will be available in the future, but preliminary findings include:
  - gyms/recreational sports having problems recouping time lost and disinfecting space is challenging due to product short fall
  - salons challenged with PPE hard to find and high risk between workers/patrons
  - hotels/motels struggled when only allowed to admit essential workers as guests
  - single proprietors had one source of income, but cannot take on other work due to restrictions
  - small businesses having issues purchasing PPE (supply and cost),
  - issues with customers following safety protocol,
  - 28% of businesses were rejected by federal financial assistance (SBA/PPP/EIDL),
  - supply chain issues due to short falls,
  - multi-lingual translation challenges, and
  - government hotline resources for unemployment or loans “can be a wild goose chase.”
- CDBG – CV Grant Funding: Staff is working with ECHO in preparing for a future Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID grant proposal for Groton. We are targeting about \$300,000 call addressing an initial \$7 million in grant funds for small communities in CT. Part one of our grant will establish a stockpile of critical PPE and supplies which were and are difficult to

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

JUNE 2020

purchase during the current pandemic including face masks, N-95 respirators, gloves, Tyvek protective clothing, Plexi-Glass for barriers, plastic sheeting for isolation and critical barriers. Part two will involve preparation of personnel who will be on the front lines. Part three will involve the adaptation of health curriculum within the existing public-school systems at all levels with age appropriate lessons on the health and wellness activities. Staff and ECHO have held positive meetings with both Groton Public Schools and Grasso Technical School.

- Marketing: Staff coordinated with *Business in Focus* magazine to develop an article spotlighting Groton. The last such article was in 2018. This article is found on page 52 of this link. [https://mags.businessinfocusmagazine.com/e\\_mag/BIFNAJul2020/#page=52](https://mags.businessinfocusmagazine.com/e_mag/BIFNAJul2020/#page=52) Also, Mayor Granatosky and staff participated in an Eastern Chamber economic development Zoom update on June 30<sup>th</sup>. In addition, staff has begun developing school and educational materials plus video to promote Groton's commitment to public education as a community and economic asset.
- Wayfinding Sign Master Plan Implementation: Staff is completing a grant proposal to be submitted 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 sign implementation, but additional funding is required.
- Plastics Reduction Program: The Town Council decided to delay the enforcement of the Plastics Reduction Ordinance by 90 days in light of the COVID business impact. Staff relayed this decision to the business community through the website and social media channels. Additionally, staff has been approached by Groton Conservation Advocates regarding a potential business window decal supporting plastics reduction. They will present at the July 9<sup>th</sup> EDC meeting.
- Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) Programming: Staff submitted the NAA proposals in June to the state for approvals. These included: Bill Memorial Library - \$58,402; Sacred Heart School - \$130,827; Groton Housing Authority - \$150,000; Odd Fellows Home of CT - \$93,749; Avery-Copp Museum - \$62,400; and Eastern CT Housing Opportunities (ECHO) - \$149,500.
- Economic Assistance Fund (EAF): Staff successfully submitted documentation for grant reimbursement for Crossfit Enguz on Leonard Drive. Staff is working with Grand Wine & Spirits to receive documentation to enable grant reimbursement processing. Staff had conversations with 3 Water Street regarding the potential for EAF funding assistance.

### Public Property Redevelopment:

- Public Property Redevelopment (Mystic Education Center): Staff continues coordinating with the Respler Homes team regarding the "Mystic River Bluffs" project. See the link for more project information <https://resplerhomes.com/mystic-river-bluffs/> Staff emphasis continues to be on the proposed zoning language for future P&Z Commission review. Also, staff has been discussing financing options with Respler. Greenplay and town staff have been working on the

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

JUNE 2020

engineering study for the Pratt Building plus the focus on the community wide recreation needs assessment. Coursey & Company, serves as the Respler's project outreach coordinator. The public is encouraged to reach out to Coursey with questions. 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. Financing discussions are ongoing. 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 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): 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. 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): Staff has coordinated with the recommended "preferred developer" to prepare for a future direct introduction with the Town Council in July.
- Public Property Redevelopment (Pleasant Valley School): Staff continued marketing efforts including use of Loopnet. The draft RFP is being finalized now. It will be issued later in August.

### Economic Development Metrics:

#### Trade Name Metrics:

- There were 3 trade name certificates this month in the Town of Groton.

#### Social Media Metrics:

- 598 Facebook followers, increase 1% from last month  
\*\* Please follow the Facebook page and share our posts to your network:  
<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonEconomicDevelopment/>
- 63 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!

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

JUNE 2020

Website Metrics: (June 1 – June 30) [www.exploremoregroton.com](http://www.exploremoregroton.com)

- Total Sessions: 1,607 (1,329 new/278 returning), decrease 37% from last month
- Pages per session: 1.73, increase 4%
- Total Page Views: 2,780, decrease 38%
- Average Time Duration: 1 min 5 seconds, decrease 7%

\*\* Note, overall website activity has decreased as the frequency of COVID-19 related news updates and state guidelines has reduced.

- 461 subscribers on the Newsletter Mailing List, 3% 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:

- 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.

### Upcoming Meetings of Interest and Key Dates:

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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>