

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

March 2016

The following documents economic development activities in March 2016.

Administration:

- Economic Development Specialist Position: A finalist was selected for the vacancy with an anticipated start date in April.

Economic Development Efforts:

- Zoning Audit and Market Analysis: Staff has been focused on final edits to the documents and review of the opportunity area analyses. Both the Market Analysis and Zoning Audit drafts can be found at the following link:
<http://www.groton-ct.gov/depts/plandev/MarketAnalysis.asp>
- Marketing and Promotions: Staff continues to work with the EDC on suggested changes to the brochure. The brochure is part of the larger business outreach effort. Staff has continued discussions with Camoin regarding next steps in marketing/promotions. Priority is the creation of a dedicated Town Economic Development Website. Funding is being sought in the FY 2017 budget for this initiative as well as for increased public relations and community signage. Other initiatives include email marketing, social media, and hard copy materials.
- Great Blue Research Survey: Staff coordinated with Great Blue Research, a Connecticut analytical company, to begin developing a survey instrument to assist in gauging consumer and business sentiment regarding the market area. This will drill down into individual preferences as a complement to the market analysis data.
- Mystic Education Center (a.k.a. Mystic Oral School): Staff provided testimony to a Public Conveyance Committee in Hartford regarding gaining use of additional land adjacent to the Mystic Education Center. Rep. John Scott has been working with the town and General Assembly as well. There has been ongoing communication between staff and the DECD regarding the state/local partnership for this property including funding.
- EV Project: A second EV plug charging station grant was awarded and will be installed at Town Hall. The first round allocation provides Groton with a vehicle and charging stations at the Annex and the Public Library/Senior Center.
- Airport Development Zone: Staff has partnered with the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) to assist in completing this application. The application is the first step involving significant research and analysis involving data projections of job and business growth. After receiving the future state (DECD) approval, a subsequent step will involve a legislative effort to adjusting the ADZ boundary.
- Incentives: Staff has been reviewing existing and state incentives in preparation for the development of an easy to use listing and explanation document.

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- Economic Assistance Fund: Staff has received applications from two existing local businesses seeking to expand that need infrastructure assistance. Their applications will be reviewed over the next few weeks.
- Enterprise Zone: Staff is providing assistance to a local business in completing the business incentive application for state submittal.
- “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”: Staff continues discussing the idea of “pop up” shop within a vacant Mystic storefront on West Main. A visitor’s information center would be a part of that effort.
- Thames River Heritage Park: Staff has been active specifically with the water taxi operator selection. An operator has been chosen and Memorial Day weekend is the targeted launch. Attended project celebration meeting at Garde Arts Center.
- I-95 Signage: CTDOT is replacing all signs on I-95 from New London to the RI border. This is a multi-million dollar project. Plans have been provided to municipalities for review and comment. Staff is working with Groton officials and individuals on this effort.
- Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): Staff participated with seCTer regarding the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This will be an ongoing multi-month effort. A public input meeting for this effort involving Groton, Stonington, North Stonington and Ledyard will be **Monday, April 11th** starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Mystic VFW.
- CDBG: Staff has been developing the annual Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant proposal application for state submittal including completion of public hearings. This year’s request is for \$800,000 for housing improvements at Groton Housing Authority property.

Meetings/Outreach:

- Staff participated in meetings/conversations with partner agencies including CT Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), seCTer, CERC, Eastern CT Chamber, Greater Mystic Chamber, Groton Business Association, Mystic Merchants Association, and Mystic Museum of Art.
- Staff interaction with new and existing businesses is significant. There were about 36 recorded inquiries and communication with business prospects in March. Several new businesses are in process of opening or signing leases in Mystic including a microbrewery, bakery, breakfast restaurant, and retail stores.
- One unfortunate piece of news is that Ivory Ella is departing Groton due to an inability to find a building suitable for their growing needs. This reaffirms a market analysis finding that Groton needs “ready to go” space for new and growing businesses.