

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2020

The following summarizes Economic Development Division activities for September 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 tracked the state's COVID guidance. Governor Lamont released new COVID guidance regarding business capacity and use as Phase 3 on September 24th to be effective October 8th. These include:
  - Increase from 50 percent to 75 percent capacity indoors – subject to COVID-19 safety requirements – for restaurants, personal services, hair salons, barber shops, and libraries;
  - Outdoor event venues (e.g. amphitheaters, race tracks, etc.) will increase from 25 percent to 50 percent capacity with masks and social distancing requirements;
  - Indoor performing arts venues will be able to open at 50 percent capacity with masks and social distancing requirements; and
  - Bars and nightclubs will continue to remain closed.

Additional Phase 3 guidance for outdoor and indoor activities can be found on the Business Assistance web page <https://bit.ly/GrotonBizRecovery>. Also, staff participated in Groton's "Long Term Recovery Committee" meeting held on September 16<sup>th</sup> at which COVID updates are provided. Staff provided an overview of the Naviretail's second survey business findings. Staff was asked to develop a listing of Council initiatives to assist businesses.

- Naviretail Local Business Analysis: Staff coordinated with Naviretail the second business survey preliminary results. That survey began August 10th. The preliminary notes are attached to this report. Highlights illustrate some business improvements during the summery, but businesses relying on large gatherings (weddings, events, venues, photography, etc.) are suffering. 48% of the businesses are doing worse than in 2019, 34% have reached expected performance, and about 18% are performing better than expected. PPE is less of a concern at moment. The latest issue is major supply chain disruptions for small businesses. The results also found businesses are not adequately using online formats.
- Economic Assistance Fund: Staff completed the reimbursement process for Grand Wine & Spirits. A \$59,000 check was issued for the business after successfully proving property improvement was finalized and payments made to the contractor. A new application has been received for The Standard located at 3 Water Street.
- Plastics Reduction Forum: Staff worked with EDC Chair Groves to plan for and execute the Plastics Reduction Forum on September 21<sup>st</sup> held in Zoom format. After a brief introduction by Bruce Lofgren from OPDS of the plastics regulation, the focus was on non-plastic suppliers. Jeff Apicelli from ConnRI and Russell Sheikowitz from WB Mason served as panelists to describe vendor offerings and perspectives for businesses. They emphasized non-plastic materials are in

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short supply and cost twice as much as their plastic counterparts. This Zoom meeting is available on the ExploreMoreGroton website.

- Mystic Parking Study: Staff has initiated the Mystic Parking Study through coordination with counterparts in Stonington. John Burke is serving as the consultant for both municipalities. Traffic counts are in process as well as reviewing available parking spaces and existing documents. The process and report will focus on short, medium and long term creative solutions.
- New Community Development Planner: OPDS completed the process of filling the position of Community Development Planner located in the Economic and Community Development Division. Ms. Tabitha Harkin will begin on Tuesday, September 29<sup>th</sup>. She has wide range of experience in planning, community development and planning. Her previous position was the Director of Planning for the City of New Bedford, MA.
- TRIP Year 4: Staff participated on the TRIP Board in reviewing and evaluating Year 4 project funding proposals. A large number of proposals were received. The TRIP Board was successful in selecting targeted projects and will forward them to the CT Next Board shortly requesting funding for the Thames River Region (Groton/New London). Funding for Year 4 is approximately \$1.5 million.

### Public Property Redevelopment:

- Public Property Redevelopment (Mystic Education Center): The “Mystic River Bluffs” project is advancing with staff meetings weekly. See the link for more project information <https://resplerhomes.com/mystic-river-bluffs/> The zoning draft has been reviewed by staff and attorneys and will be sent to P&Z Commission in October. The Pratt Building remains a focus since it will be converted into a modern public recreation facility. Groton’s recreation consultant, Greenplay, is completing the recreation programming after input from the Parks & Recreation Department and community input. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) budgeting is still ongoing and the TIF Master Plan effort is underway. Fuss & O’Neil, Respler’s engineering contractor, is still refining design and engineering concepts for the Master Plan. Groundbreaking for Phase I is envisioned in 2021 beginning with the adaptive reuse of all existing buildings plus infrastructure work. 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.

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- Public Property Redevelopment (517/529 Gold Star Highway): The project envisions the development of approximately 300 apartments on 17.75 acres. Staff and development team are discussing next steps.
- Public Property Redevelopment (Seely School): The “Triton Square” project conceptual site plan was presented by the developer (DonMar) to the Town Council in a COW meeting on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Pedestrian and vehicular access, recreation, parking, stormwater management, landscaping, and connectivity were key discussion points. The 308-unit multi-family apartment development concept plan was endorsed. Targeted future tenants are young professionals and “empty-nesters.” Anticipated property tax revenue is in the magnitude of \$1 million annually. See this project page. <https://www.seelyschool.com/>
- Public Property Redevelopment (Colonel Ledyard School): The preferred developer has been meeting individually with neighbors and is planning a future project unveiling meeting for the public. A property purchase agreement is being finalized by Groton and the developer for Town Council review and approval.
- Public Property Redevelopment (Pleasant Valley School): The RFP issued in August expects proposals due by October 28, 2020. <http://www.groton-ct.gov/depts/finance/bid.asp>

### Economic Development Metrics:

#### Trade Name Metrics:

- There were 4 trade name certificates this month in the Town of Groton.

#### Social Media Metrics:

- 600 Facebook followers, negligible change  
\*\* Please follow the Facebook page and share our posts to your network:  
<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonEconomicDevelopment/>
- 66 LinkedIn page followers, negligible change  
\*\* 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: (August 26 – September 24) [www.exploremoregroton.com](http://www.exploremoregroton.com)

- Total Sessions: 1,572 (1,368 new/204 returning), decrease 29 percent
- Pages per session: 1.49, no change
- Total Page Views: 2,342, decrease 28 percent
- Average Time Duration: 0 min 44 seconds, decrease 17 percent
- 472 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>)

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### Unemployment Data (PCT.)

Month	Groton	Norwich-New London- Westerly Labor Market Area	Connecticut
January 2020	3.7	4.5	4.4
February 2020	3.6	4.4	4.4
March 2020	3.0	3.8	3.6
April 2020	11.1	13.8	8.0
May 2020	12.6	15.0	9.4
June 2020	11.8	13.3	10.2
July 2020	10.9	12.4	10.3
August 2020	8.6	10.2	8.2

### Key Property Development Updates:

- 250 Leonard Drive      Butler Building      CO issued
- 258 Route 12      Chipotle and Jersey Mikes      CO issued
- 13 Water Street      Oyster Club      CO issued
- 3 Water Street      The Standard      Construction is ongoing
- 702 N. Pleasant Valley      Pleasant Valley Apartments      3rd building being insulated, pool being finished up
- 531 Route 12      Cardinal Honda      Addition and remodel ongoing
- 425 Goldstar Highway      Girard Nissan      1st phase of remodel ongoing
- 14 Godfrey Street      Mystic River Residential Care      2nd phase CO issued
- 800 Flanders      Mystic Industrial Park      Building 14 application is being reviewed

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>