



Economic Development Committee Minutes

March 14, 2025

9 AM to 10:30 AM

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 3/14/25, held virtually via Zoom.

Called to Order: 9 AM

EDC Members Present: Patty Sutherland, Shirley Ming, David Cote, Sharon Tchon Gruet, Michael Carpenter

Associate Members Present: Greg Jarboe

EDC Members Absent: James Fuccione, Planning Board Liaison

Select Board Liaison: Fran Arsenault

Town Staff: Maura Haberman - Liaison for EDC

Also present: Amol Patil – interested in joining EDC

PRELIMINARIES

Call the Roll – attendance is noted above.

I. REGULAR BUSINESS

- Review of meeting minutes from previous meetings (January 17, 2025)
Passed unanimously
- Public participation

II. NEW/SPECIAL BUSINESS

• Status of Economic Development Director Role

Interview of final 6 candidates are in progress and should have a candidate by end of next week.

• RKG Associates Status/Strategic Plan for Economic Development

Kristen is waiting for finalized timeline from RKG. RKG will then will be compiling the data and identifying emerging themes for general strategies and opportunity areas.

A full working draft of the plan by early May which will be shared with the EDC for comment.

Then, a release of a draft plan for the general public to submit comments would be around mid-May. Then, at the end of May EDC will host a meeting where RKG would present the final draft plan. The EDC is working on finalizing a Wednesday evening date in late May to hold a general public workshop.

The Survey closes March 17. Members are encouraged to provide feedback and share the survey with others in the Acton community. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/B6XB278>

III. OLD BUSINESS

• Outreach/Communication Plan (Mike/Dave)

Patty noted that EDC should reignite the Outreach/Communication Plan done earlier with Mike and Dave. Maura mentioned that we have started to use Constant Contact for the Business Boost newsletter which has 300+- email addresses. However, the business listing that the

Town Clerk has only about 1/3 of 620 DBA business licenses. An option in the future was utilizing the Quarterly Municipal tax bill as an opportunity for insert, but needs to be planned early.

The committee felt that conducting a survey would be a good first step to have business owner input on how they would like to receive communication information. Sharon noted that the business directory has missing sector, such as pop-up shop or board of health permit applicant. Maura mentioned that the listing that the Health Department has includes emails and that list can be obtained from the health department.

Action Item: Patty will look up communication subcommittee notes and share.

- **Housing Production Plan (Patty/Shirley)**

A third workshop was held last week with good attendance and did a good job grabbing people's attention.

- **EDC's goals for FY25, Strategic Plan and New Business Welcome**

In the past the Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce played a big role with Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies. Some of the MWCoC members transitioned over to the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce, however, not many due to its location. It is important for EDC to support welcoming our new businesses in the interim.

- **Member Updates**

Topic updates from James relayed by Patty:

There are a lot of activities planned including special brew around 250th anniversary happening soon - <https://actonma.gov/250>

Businesses can choose to sponsor event.

Topic updates from Sharon:

1. Remote participation for business owners to speak about articles at Acton Town Meeting EDC Voted unanimously to draft a letter of support to Town Manager and Select Board. Passed unanimously

Mike will take this action item.

2. Business Signage for Business Along the Rail Trail

Sharon had reported that at the Velvet Vine Café opening, the business owner mentioned that business along the bike path is not allowed to advertise on Bruce freeman trail.

Maura reported that Kristen Guichard, Planning Director had sent an email "...in the back of buildings facing the rail trail, secondary signs are allowed, we would encourage any interested business to contact our office so we can assist them with the online application process."

- EDC circled back on the communication plan on how best to reach the businesses along the rail trail, via town website, mailer?

3. Sharon reported that only a postcard mailing is being sent out for the spring Town Meeting that will direct user to get the booklet from Town Hall, no more town meeting booklet mailing.

- Fran noted that this will be a topic for Monday's Select Board meeting.
- The EDC voted unanimously to draft a letter to the Select Board in support of post card mailing in lieu of a warrant booklet that includes a QR code and have a limited number of printed copies available at town hall, library, and senior center.
- Passed unanimously.
- Sharon will take this action item.

Topic updates from David Cote

Would like to explore an awards program. South Portland has a self-created awards program from EDC for business of different sizes. They have a lot of the material on their website for viewing. Patty noted that Maura has a "For the Love our Businesses Luncheon" held in February mainly geared for sponsors of the NARA Park events, which was well attended. Maura noted that MWCoC prior to Covid, had a similar successful event: Annual Awards Gala Celebration ~ Night of Stars, held annually to recognize local businesses and nonprofits. This event sounded very similar to the City of Portland's event. Consensus: An awards event and panel would need a banquet/panel committee. To be further discussed.

IV. MORE REGULAR BUSINESS

- **ED Events – Ribbon Cuttings**

1. Silver girl opening is successful with Patty, Greg, Sharon and Maura attending.
2. Upcoming events are the following:
 - Monday, April 7
 - Acton Cycles Bike and Ski Shop, 10 AM
 - As You Like It Hair Salon at 11AM
 - Luna Mexican Cuisine at 12 PM
 - Friday, April 18
 - The Shop (name of business), which sells antique furniture 562 Mass Ave., 11 AM

- **Restaurant Week 2025**

Held in October. Encourage Town employees, boards and committees to eat out at local restaurants contest/incentive. Encourage patronage by our community to dine at our local eateries via contest.

- **DEI and other Community events**

No DEI activities at this time are scheduled.

- **Next meeting**

Meetings moving forward will be held the first Friday of the month from 9:30-11 AM.

Next meeting April 4 – 9:30 AM to 11AM.

- **Updates from Boards and Committees for future meetings**

- **Update from Economic Development Director** – Maura, Interim Liaison, Noted under sections above.
- **May is National Small Business Week and Month**--May 4 to 11, 2025. Announced by the Small Business Administration.
- **Create EDC Survey to Send Out to Businesses**
- Awards Program Discussion?

V. CONSENT ITEMS

Votes are noted in the section above.

Next Steps and Action Items:

Noted in the section above.

Additional material:

<https://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-18337>

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 am.

For more information about the Economic Development Committee, please send email to EDC@actonma.gov