

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 5/14/18, held in Room 204 of Acton Town Hall.
Present: Selby, Mike Majors, Josh Fischel, Larry Kenah, Dave Didriksen, Peter Daniel, Derrick Chin, Jon Benson
Absent: David Foley, Ann Chang, Shirley Ming
Guests: Roland Bartl, Judy Barrett

Judy Barrett will be working on a project through a planning board grant with the town for the next nine months.

Essential question: What are the town's economic development assets, and what might stand in the way of us achieving our goals?

We went around the table and introduced ourselves. That was nice.

Back to Judy's spiel: one of the components of the grant is a self-assessment of economic development. Information that needs to be gathered by June 30th includes gathered knowledge from us and, more crucially, from the business community.

Roland Bartl asks how the housing market impacts economic opportunities and growth.

Dave Didriksen asks who the audience is for the answers and the report. Judy commends him for his great question. Judy wonders if there are traditionally comparable communities for us. Selby points out that the town's HR department has such a list. Larry Kenah says every institution in town has a list. Judy says she'll look at all those lists and see which ones we most commonly think of as in common with us. Larry asks what the point is of comparing ourselves to five other communities? Mike says context is important. We say we're good, but how good are we in comparison with these other towns we think we're similar to? Finally, Judy says the audience is the town and its voters. It's a deliverable for us.

Selby suggests Ashland could be a comparable community from an economic development standpoint.

Judy brings up the name Barry Bluestone, which leads to this week's fun fact.

FUN FACT OF THE WEEK: I was Barry Bluestone's son's summer camp counselor.
(I know. Not that fun. His name is also Josh? Still not that fun. Eh, back to taking notes.)

Dave is known for his off-the-wall comparisons, says Dave.

Larry asks what a list of answers to Judy's essential question would look like.

Judy asks if we'd be comfortable with hosting a meeting of the business community. In this case, our silence is equivalent to our assent. So, we move to finding a date. Dave worries attendance might be low, given that our notice is short, the date is immediately after Memorial Day weekend, business owners don't all live in Acton, etc.

Peter Daniel says he's more concerned with what the position of Acton is in terms of economic development; Judy points out that that's where we're trying to get to, and says she could push to the first week of June, but no later.

Dave asks if the meeting with the business community is superfluous, and we could just capture the answers in an online survey. Judy still sees value in a discussion. Dave and Peter advocate for a short, concise survey and a tight meeting agenda to increase participation and involvement.

Peter says his sense of Chamber members is that they don't feel the town has their back, and it comes from the leadership of various town departments. He goes on a self-described rant. Dave extrapolates upon it, true to form. They make good, emphatic points, but far be it from me to try to recreate the passion and vision of these two businessmen. Dave's endpoint is that he wants the town to say to small businesses, "Yes, we have rules, but we want you here."

Dave wants the EDC to get across that the business community is part of the community here. We have not been able to sell that adequately yet.

We set the times for our June 4th meetings at 9 am and 4 pm. Judy will share a flyer with the committee ASAP so we can get the word out to businesses.

There will not be an EDC meeting on Thursday, June 7th.

Judy will pull 10 questions from the existing 100-question survey and get them out to us within 24-48 hours to then push out to businesses.

All that done, Dave presents Maynard's flyer for the Assabet River Rail Trail, which highlights all their businesses. It looks great, and the designer/printer is in Maynard, so Dave wants to call them up, visit the EDC in Maynard, and then see if we can scare up a few thousand dollars for this at Town Meeting. Selby says there's an EDC budget.

Adjourned at a time I did not note.