



## Economic Development Committee

### Meeting Minutes

1 October 2020

7:00 pm

Zoom Video Conference

<b>Present</b>	Ann Chang, Dan Malloy, Dave Didriksen, Derrick Chin (PB), Jon Benson (BoS), Mike Majors (FinCom), Larry Kenah (chair)
<b>Not Present</b>	Josh Fischel, Peter Daniel, Shirley Ming
<b>Town of Acton</b>	Selby (Economic Development Director)

Catherine Usoff, a potential EDC member, and John Raguin also attended the meeting.

### Opening

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm and the roll was called.

### *Prologue*

All open meetings in the Town of Acton that are supported by the Zoom application must begin with a prologue that provides the legal context for the meeting. Larry Kenah recited the prologue, reproduced here.

“Good evening. It is 7:02 pm. This Open Meeting of the Economic Development Committee is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker’s Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth, and the Local State of Emergency declared by the Acton Board of Selectmen and Board of Health due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 Virus.

“In order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, the Board of Selectmen has suspended all public gatherings, and in accordance with the Governor’s Order all members of public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. The Governor’s Order, allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations and Committee votes of the meeting.

“Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. This meeting will feature public comment from invited guests. For this meeting, the Economic Development Committee is convening by video conference via the Zoom application. The meeting agenda posted on the Town’s Website calendar indicates how the public may join.



“Please note that this meeting is being recorded and that some attendees are participating by video conference. Accordingly, please be aware that other folks may be able to see you and anything that you broadcast may be captured by the recording.

“All of the materials for this meeting, except for any Executive Session materials, are available in the public DocuShare folder, and we recommend that the members and the public follow the agenda as posted.

“We are now turning to the first item on the agenda. Before we do so, permit me to cover some ground rules for effective and clear conduct of our business, and to ensure accurate meeting minutes.

- Selby or I will introduce each speaker on the agenda. After they conclude their remarks, I will then go down the line of Members, inviting each by name to provide any comment, questions, or motions. Please hold until your name is called. Further,
  - Please remember to mute your phone or computer when you are not speaking;
  - Please remember to speak clearly and in a way that helps generate accurate minutes
- For any response, please wait until the Chair yields the floor to you, and state your name before speaking.
- If members wish to engage in discussion with other members, please do so through the Chair, taking care to identify yourself.

“After members have spoken, the Chair will afford public comment as follows:

○ The Chair will first ask members of the public who wish to speak to identify their names and addresses only after first being recognized by the Chair, and will be afforded two minutes for their comment or question.

• Finally, each vote taken in this meeting will be conducted by roll call vote. This requirement extends to the vote to adjourn.”

At this point, the remainder of the meeting began.

Jon Benson introduced Catherine Ustoff who has expressed interest in joining the EDC. Catherine expressed her interest and said that she is eager to join the EDC. She gave a brief summary of her background. In her former role as business dean at Clark University, the regional Small Business Development Center (SBDC) reported to her. She expressed strong support for local businesses.

We then went around the room and each member introduced herself or himself to Catherine.

### ***1. Meeting Minutes***

Josh was not at the meeting so we skipped reviewing the meeting minutes from 3 September 2020.

### ***2. Public Participation***

There was no public participation.

## **New/Special Business**



### ***3. Buy Local Campaign***

John Raguin gave some background on the Buy Local campaign,

- He talked with between 60 to 70 small businesses.
- The signs will measure 16 x 24 inches.
- There will be two overhead signs
  - Route 27 (Main Street) by Taylor Road intersection
  - West Acton
- There will be sandwich boards as well.

John said that he did plagiarize some ideas from other buy local campaigns.

Dave Didriksen suggested that we place signs elsewhere as well, not just at business locations. He suggested including the schools and the community at large.

Mike Majors pointed out that the local chamber did not have much money in its coffers.

John R is trying to contact the Acton Lions Club.

The over-the-road signs cost between \$350 and \$500 per sign.

The West Acton merchants will pay for the first 50 16 x 24 signs.

Dave D asked about adding support for the Buy Local campaign on the town Web site.

There was a motion for the EDC to support the Buy Local campaign. The committee voted to support the campaign.

### ***4. Drive Through Zoning Change***

We talked briefly about the proposed zoning change in support of this change. Members were urged to attend the upcoming public forums to address this change.

- 15 October
- 10 December
  - We learned after the meeting that this meeting has been rescheduled to 8 December 2020.

Jon Benson provided additional information.

- There is little to no objection to allowing drive through access for pharmacies.
- Food vendors present a bigger issue.

### ***5. Grant Programs***

Selby provided an update on a grant that he is pursuing.

It is a so-called micro-enterprise grants in conjunction with four surrounding communities.

- Boxborough



- Maynard
- Littleton
- Westford

## **6. *EDC and FY22 Budget***

Selby described how he had attempted to participate in an empty storefront grant program. He was unable to advance the request because the town was unable to supply matching funds. Selby suggested that it would help if he (or the EDC or the town) had a small cache of funds to participate in efforts like this.

One suggestion that he had was to set aside a portion of the meals tax. The town collects approximately \$300 k per year from this tax.

## **7. *Restaurant Week***

Notices have gone out for participation. The effort is moving along but the question remains who will participate. As a reminder, Restaurant Week runs from 25 October to 31 October.

## **8. *Marketing the Town***

Selby described an effort that started before COVID shut everything down. Acton was working with a media group to produce short videos (about one minute each) that describe the town. The question was whether the town should restart the effort. Most businesses that had previously supported the effort would like to move forward.

Dan Malloy asked whether the media company needed a minimum number of businesses to participate.

Dave Didriksen observed that the only bad publicity is no publicity. He also suggested that we put a link to the videos on the town Web site.

## **More Regular Business**

### **9. *Updates from Members***

#### **EDC Support for Article 4 at Special Town Meeting**

Jon Benson thanked the committee for its support for small businesses (Article 4) at the recent special town meeting. He contrasted unanimous support from the EDC with split support (5 to 4 against Article 4) from the Finance Committee.

#### **Asa Parlin House**

Mike Majors mentioned that the town is thinking about using the Asa Parlin House (next to the town and library parking lots) for state-of-the-art meeting rooms and a conference center. The town is soliciting ideas.

Someone asked when we acquired this property. Ann Chang believed that it happened when we built the additions to the library.



### **10.        *Updates from Selby***

Selby brought up a combined effort with Maynard to improve the Powder Mill Road Corridor (Route 62 in South Acton). Maynard will host a public forum for ideas. Selby reminded everyone that the town controls the zoning.

Somewhere towards the end of the meeting, someone pointed that the Caroll Spinney “Be Kind” signs are all over the place.

### **11.        *Next Meeting and Adjournment***

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 5 November 2020, at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

## **Documents and Exhibits Used during This Meeting**

- Draft EDC Meeting Minutes from 3 September 2020