



These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 6/4/20, held remotely at 10 am

Called to Order: 10:05 am

Members Present: Mike Majors, Ann Chang, Josh Fischel, Larry Kenah, Shirley Ming, Jon Benson, Derrick Chin

Staff Present: Selby (Economic Development Director)

Members Absent: David Foley, Dave Didriksen, Peter Daniel

Visitors/Guests: Dan Malloy, Emma Kearney, John Raguin

“Good morning. It is 10:05 am. 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 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.

“Meeting Business Ground Rules

“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 (if applicable). After they conclude their remarks, the Chair will 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,
 - o Please remember to mute your phone or computer when you are not speaking;
 - o 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:

o 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 a few minutes for their comment or question.

• Finally, each vote taken in this meeting will be conducted by roll call vote. As I mentioned in a note that I sent earlier this week, this requirement extends to the vote to adjourn.”

I. Regular Business

1. Review of meeting minutes from 21 May 2020

Motion to Approve Minutes: Yes: 6, No: 0, Abstain: 1

2. Public participation

Larry Kenah invites our esteemed guests to join in the conversation as they see fit.

II. New/Special Business

3. Small Business Grant Program

Selby provides an overview. At the BoS meeting, on 5/26, there was discussion about the \$2.1 million of CARES Act funding for two purposes, including allocating \$100K for small business grants of \$4,000. Emma Kearney, who is interning with Town Hall, has called up small businesses to encourage them to apply. There has been a lot of positive response; within the past two days, five completed applications have been submitted. Nonprofits and businesses without a commercial presence in Acton are ineligible. Same with new business owners, because they can't show that their revenue is down 50% from the same stretch last year.

To allocate fairly instead of just on a first-come, first-served basis, Selby decided to hold a lottery process with all eligible applicants. Selby sent out the application to 165 email addresses from the database that the Kenah family created a year or two ago.

Larry Kenah asks about dentists specifically; have they been notified? The committee throws out the names and types of other businesses to inquire whether they qualify and how can we help them if they do not. Selby encourages businesses to take their time and check the criteria in the application itself to make sure they qualify. There may be opportunities for others that don't qualify for this particular grant.

On Monday, there will be a hearing about block grant funds being made available to non-entitlement communities. Grant will be limited to \$400,000 per community, for \$10,000 grants for “micro-businesses” (five or fewer employees, including the owner). Applications are considered stronger if they're regional, so Maynard, Boxborough, Littleton, and perhaps Westford are on board; Acton is leading on this.

4. Town Meeting Articles

Jon Benson provides a brief overview of what Town Meeting will look like, logistically: one night, streamlined. One option is an outdoor overflow “room” on campus. The top priority is safety, obviously. Jon asked about start time to ensure getting everything done. FinCom was open to an earlier start time; the sense of our committee is in the 5-6 pm range.

Various possible articles are discussed; they are generally about re-zoning and re-purposing lots around town to accommodate commercial uses. We discuss whether the EDC should chime in during Town Meeting about one or more of these. One is more controversial with the committee than the other.

5. Next steps for EDC

Larry Kenah asks for more tangible steps we can take. John Raguin asks the EDC to put more pressure on the BoS to give larger grants to a smaller number of businesses, *or* to increase the size of the grant program. He is skeptical that the \$4,000 will actually do much for businesses. Ann Chang was surprised that the BoS passed even \$100,000; she wants the program to get going, allow the BoS to see that the funds will not be enough, which will allow them to put more money into it. People express how impressed they are with the speed with which the BoS has acted in this case.

III. More Regular Business

6. Updates from members

Derrick has an update on the SBA payroll protection plan; Congress passed an extension of the supplemental unemployment benefits to last 24 weeks instead of eight weeks. Businesses can use more of it for operation expenses and rent, and not just for payroll, said Dan Malloy. There is discussion about whether the plan is a good idea in the first place.

7. Update from Director of Economic Development

Selby said they worked on some guidance to allow businesses to expand their outdoor seating; anyone with a liquor license needs a vote from the BoS (next week) to extend their license to their outdoor spaces.

8. Next meeting – date and time

June 18th at 10 am

IV. Consent Items

9. None

Adjourned at 11:48—unanimous

Additional materials

- Draft meeting minutes from 21 May 2020

The listed agenda items are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair. Not all items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request. Include a description of the accommodation you will need, including as much detail as you can and include a way

*we can contact you if we need more information. Please allow advance notice. Send an e-mail to **manager@actonma.gov** or call Town Manager's Office **(978)929-6611***

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