



These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 3/18/21, held remotely at 7 pm

Called to Order: 7:05 pm

Members Present: Mike Majors, Ann Chang, Josh Fischel, Larry Kenah, Dean Charter (in Jon Benson's place), Dan Malloy, Catherine Usoff, David Cote, David Didriksen, Derrick Chin, Shirley Ming

Staff Present: Selby (Economic Development Director)

Members Absent: Peter Daniel, Jon Benson

### **Regular Business**

1. Review of meeting minutes from 3/4/21

Minutes from March 4th are approved, with one parenthetical aside removed, unanimously, 8-0, with two abstentions.

2. Public participation

There are three members of the public on the call; one participant speaks to her interest in learning about the scope of what we do.

### **II. New/Special Business**

3. Local Rapid Recovery Program (Selby)

This is a project for which Selby and Kristen Guichard would like the EDC to be involved: it's to help businesses along the Great Road Corridor. The town has received a \$60,000 technical assistance grant through the Rapid Recovery Program of the MA Department of Housing and Community Development. The program is designed to help every MA municipality "to revitalize downtowns, respond to the effects of COVID-19 on local businesses, and prioritize actions and strategies." The first step will be to administer a state standardized survey and data collection. The outcome should be actions and funding sources for those. (The vacant storefront program through the Commonwealth should give us some of that funding.) The EDC should be appoint someone to the ad-hoc committee that's working on this; Derrick Chin (also representing the Planning Board) and David Didriksen (former Great Road business owner) both volunteer.

4. Proposal for EDC—Next Steps (Dan Malloy and Catherine Usoff)

Catherine Usoff did some re-ordering and re-configuring our priorities in the document that she and Dan presented last meeting. 50 Nagog Park now tops her list, followed by a business inventory and an economic development strategic plan. Dan chimes in that there would be a standardized reporting template. The committee volunteers as such:

50 Nagog Park—Dan Malloy, Shirley Ming

Business Inventory—David D., Mike Majors, Larry Kenah

Economic Development Strategic Plan—David Cote, Josh Fischel, Catherine Usoff

Other—Ann Chang

LK says that everything gets quickly reduced to an acronym, and then announces that we'll have basic reports from each of these committees at our next meeting.

## 5. Updates from Select Board (Dean Charter)

- KMart proposal: The site generates \$131,000 a year in property taxes; it is for sale for about \$6 million. Stop & Shop has put some broad parameters on who can buy it, and there are zoning restrictions (commercial only at this point). The proposal in front of the Board now—very preliminary—is by National Development, with senior housing rental units with a continuum of care (a one-stop shop for retirement through end-of-life). They've done 30 of these inside 495. That would sit where the existing KMart is; the rest of it would be two retail/restaurant businesses facing Main Street, all in keeping with the Kelley's Corner plan, totaling 8-10 thousand square feet. There are no tenants in mind yet, but they'd like to work closely with local purveyors. They would replace 100 parking spots with green space and walking paths. Dean calls it "a tremendous loss of asphalt." To comply with zoning, the 100 units would be no taller than three stories. They imagine their clients would draw from local towns. Their timeline would be 2.5 years, which would fit with the re-imagining of the whole area. It would bring a lot of people into the area and generate revenue for the town. Since they won't be working, they won't have to get on the road during rush hour, adding to traffic. He says we're in the midst of a "silver tsunami."

Dan Malloy asks if there is economic opportunity that's linked to the success of the site—is there variable that improves our tax revenue if they fill these apartments? The tax assessor had given a preliminary estimate of the revenue; Selby chimes in that one of the advantages of a new development is new growth—building anew means we'd have an additional \$200 thousand in commercial tax revenue, which is a long-term stated goal of this committee.

David D. asks if they would be just the developer or the operator, too. Dean Charter says they are a vertically integrated company, so their subsidiary would operate it. They don't come in, put it up, and then go away entirely.

Dean replies to Josh's question about the wisdom of anchoring this key to the town's next wave of economic development with a senior center by pointing out that those are the grandparents whose families will come to visit. And the grandparents will presumably move out of single-family homes that could subsequently be filled with younger families. The idea is to *not* isolate seniors away out in the country.

David Cote asks about (a) whether there are zoning changes required for the current proposal; (b) whether there are additional constraints from Stop & Shop that could cause us trouble with the retail spaces; and (c) how does this compare with other proposals he's seen or thinks we could see?

Dean takes these one at a time, as one should when answering multi-part questions. (a) He does not think it would be necessary because it would be a business, supporting seniors. (b) He is not aware of any other problems. National Development has bought properties from Stop & Shop in the past. (c) He's essentially

Catherine asks if there is senior housing already going in across from the junior high and there is any confluence with this proposal. Dean says there are two senior housing units going on in the area. One is run by the Acton Housing Authority on the former Kennedy Landscaping site, and the other is called the Residences at Kelley's Corner; every unit will be affordable.

Derrick Chin asks about potential restaurants—Dean says they would prefer not to work with national chains.

Ann Chang asks about Baker-Whitney and the other sites along Mass Avenue between Bueno y Sano and CVS—are there any anticipated changes on those sites? Mike Majors reiterates the question: what’s the future for Baker-Whitney? David D. says that unless it were a Superfund site, it’ll generate opportunities if the development is good. Home heating oil does not lend itself to long-term viability.

- Drive-up windows

Zoning currently only allows certain drive-up banks. There was a 2-1 majority across various forums and surveys for pharmacies and restaurants. Dean noted that about two-thirds of participants were women. The opinions on the Board are split; it will presumably move to Town Meeting later this year. Drive-up pharmacies are more popular than restaurants, so will the Board split that up? The Design Review Board is generally *not* in favor of drive-up windows, but they came up with some architectural parameters and design constraints if the windows existed anyway. The idea is to make it happen by special permit in the village districts, and by right elsewhere. Dean’s feeling is that we might as well get *something* in place; he thinks the process of implementation will be slow, and that we’ll probably have 4-5 additional drive-thrus in the town. An example of the tension is between CVS and Acton Pharmacy; the owner of the latter is worried that his inability to put up a drive-thru at his location would put him out of business while competing against a giant like CVS.

Ann brings up that having a drive-thru at the CVS in Kelley’s Corner seems to run counter to the goal of having Kelley’s Corner be more walkable and bike-friendly. Dean says that echoes the Design Review Board’s objections.

Dan Malloy says he feels like we’re holding up a basic service that 70% of the people want it.

David Cote asks about environmental concerns with idling cars. Kristen Guichard and Robert Hummel have been looking at what kind of restrictions we can put in to make sure the queue is not too long.

### **III. More Regular Business**

#### 6. Updates from members

Mike Majors says that, now that winter is over, the landscaping will allow Minuteman Vocational High School to earn their permanent Certificate of Occupancy.

#### 7. Update from Director of Economic Development

Selby has two quick updates: the new breakfast place is all set to open where the Bickford’s used to be.

25 Powdermill Road, owned by Papalia Heating, might have a fishmonger locating there.

Selby says, in response to Mike Majors’ question, that Chase Bank will be moving into the old Middlesex Savings Bank.

#### 8. Next meeting – 1 April 2021

### **IV. Consent Items**

#### 9. None

Meeting is adjourned at 8:57 pm.

Additional materials

- Draft meeting minutes from 4 March 2021
- 2021 EDC Planning and Committee Structure (proposed)

*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.*

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For more information about the Economic Development Committee, please send email to  
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