



These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 5/6/21, held remotely at 7 pm

Called to Order: 7:03 pm

Members Present: Mike Majors, Ann Chang, Josh Fischel, Larry Kenah, Catherine Usoff, David Cote, Derrick Chin, Dan Malloy, Jon Benson, Peter Daniel, Shirley Ming

Staff Present: Selby

Members Absent: David Didriksen

## **I. Regular Business**

As Larry was reading the preamble, he asked Jon Benson when we might be out of the “state of emergency.” Jon responded that the town is being very careful, and re-opening with thought. He expects that we will get back to regular meetings sometime this summer.

At the beginning of the meeting, there were no guests from the public.

Larry provided a summary of the most recent Planning Board discussion (at their meeting on Wednesday, May 5, 2021) of the drive-up window zoning article. After some discussion, the Planning Board voted 4 – 1 to support the article as written. One member who voted against supporting the article had some concerns about drive-up windows for pharmacies related to drug safety. Derrick brought up (again) that he thought having drive-up pharmacies in Acton would put Acton Pharmacy out of business and even though some have said that there will likely not be more than 5 drive-through businesses in Acton over the next 5 years, it might be too late for Acton Pharmacy. Derrick said that the plan was for someone from Planning Board to report the vote of 4-1 at the town meeting and that the Planning Board member who voted against supporting the article could then state his reason for his vote. Larry will reach out to Dean Charter to get a copy of the current article to distribute to the EDC so the committee can discuss it at our next meeting (May 20). The EDC should decide what our position is on the article and communicate that to the Select Board in preparation for the Town Meeting.

Larry informed the EDC that Jim Snyder-Grant will attend our next meeting (May 20) to make a presentation about the proposed Town Meeting article that will prohibit new construction and major renovations from using fossil fuels for heating.

1. Review of meeting minutes from previous meetings

Minutes from April 15th are approved, unanimously, with two abstentions.

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

3. Working Group Reports

- Strategic Plan (Catherine, David Cote, and Josh)

We met with Selby the day after Patriots’ Day; we decided that we would work to gather as much input as possible from various constituents, but without adding additional peo-

ple to our working group. Catherine invites the EDC to add to our list of types of voices to include, and specific names; that's our current ask to the greater group.

Mike Majors suggests dividing business voices into retail and commercial/industrial manufacturing and biotech. He suggests that our own committee members who have had retail experience (e.g. Peter, David Didriksen) could provide subject matter expertise.

Dan Malloy is intrigued by the Dukakis Center work; all three towns in the slides we saw prioritized marketing, workforce composition, and especially timeliness of approval. He wants to focus on ease of doing business with the town. He will share those thoughts via email.

Ann Chang suggests talking with Bursaw Oil about the changes they're undergoing in terms of their business model (from oil to biofuel, for instance). She also suggests talking with the people at Colonial Spirits.

Josh suggests that we look more broadly than those companies that have been here the longest, succeeding. There is consensus on the committee about the need to talk with companies that have had to shutter and those that have grown, like Ace Hardware, Colonial Spirits, or Idylwilde.

- LRRP (Larry and Derrick)

The group met earlier today. Tom Loughlin of BETA presented some findings from the survey they issued. The next step is to do pop-up tent events with businesses in shopping areas along 2A two weeks from now, followed by a virtual meeting with other businesses who couldn't make it to the tent events.

Derrick Chin said they discussed ideas like encouraging bikers from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to patronize businesses along Great Road. He said the response rate from businesses was a little under 50%.

- Business Inventory (Mike, Larry)

Mike reports they've had big picture discussions about the data: what they want to collect, who owns it, how it gets updated, etc. He's optimistic that it could ultimately be a valuable tool for the EDC.

- The Ann Chang Project

Regarding 21 Maple Street, the Select Board chose Option #1, which will add "only" 61 parking spaces, and re-align Stow Street, adding a covered parking area. They've allowed the ambulance to lease their parking spot for another year; in the meantime, they'll look for grants and other funding sources to revitalize that area. Ann says that town government moves at its own pace, so the bicycle shop and the coffee shop that people are clamoring for will wait a little longer. She will now move on to other projects.

- 50 Nagog (Shirley & Dan)

Dan reached out to MassBio, asking about the impact of sewers on decisions businesses make. The fellow representing them said we should complete the questionnaire, indicating that we do not have town-wide sewer service and then reach back out to them for a discussion. Selby said that except for the lack of sewers, Acton qualifies at Platinum level, the highest level, on all other items.

Shirley said she was looking at another registry (the ReadyMass 100 List) for which Selby had already filled out the application for the KMart property. Property owners for 50 Nagog should foot the bill for that application fee since it will help attract potential buyers. For the KMart property, the property owners were billed directly.

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

#### 6. Updates from members

Catherine asks about new funding for restaurants that can demonstrate loss during COVID; Selby emailed out information about that the town's food service community. David is wondering about dates of availability in the summer.

Larry has an update! There was a store in West Acton called Periwinkle; it moved within that town centre, and they have now moved to Groton, creating a new vacancy in West Acton. In the Roche Brothers plaza, where there used to be a pet store, there will be a physical therapy business moving from the Starbucks complex across the street.

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

The Community Development Grant Fund for micro-enterprises (five or fewer employees, owned by a low-moderate income person): nine have been funded in Acton, as opposed to two in each of the other towns. Selby encourages us to reach out to massage therapists, hair salons, etc. The requirements for the grants have changed, and the maximum amount available per grant is now \$25,000, up from \$10,000.

There are also vacancies in the Land Use department, just posted today.

#### 8. Next meeting – 20 May 2021

### **IV. Consent Items**

#### 9. None

Meeting is adjourned at 8:29 pm.

Additional materials

- Draft meeting minutes from 15 April 2021

*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](mailto:EDC@actonma.gov)