



Economic Development Committee Minutes

5 May 2022

7:00 pm

Room 9, Acton Town Hall
472 Main Street, Acton, MA

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 5/5/22, held in Room 9 of Acton Town Hall, supported by Zoom participation for guests.

Called to Order: 7:10 pm

Members Present: Larry Kenah, Mike Majors, David Didriksen, Catherine Usoff, Shirley Ming, Dan Malloy, Chris Hardy

Also present: Mark Favermann, guest

Members Absent: Peter Daniel, Ann Chang, David Cote, Ray Yacouby

Preliminaries

Call the Roll – attendance is noted above

I. Regular Business

- Review of meeting minutes from previous meetings
 - 21 April 2022, minutes approved by all members in attendance, except for Larry Kenah who was absent from the April 21 meeting
- Public participation – Joyce Reischutz – Pedal Power, also on BFRT executive board
- Updates from Economic Development Director
 - Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Wayfinding Project

Mark Favermann attended the meeting to talk about work on the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) Wayfinding Project. Mark is an urban designer hired by town of Acton. They are on a fast track to get things done for the grant that Acton and Concord received. All funds need to be encumbered by June 30, 2022. The current logo for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail includes a dragonfly which will be used on the signage.

Mark showed a powerpoint presentation that included examples of signage and features they have designed for other trails, including maps. [Link to images](#) that Mark shared in his presentation.

Questions from the committee:

Dave D. – Will Acton and West Concord have the same types of maps? Mark – yes.

A map could have a directory of dining and stores along the trail. Dave D. said that having a directory would be beneficial to the businesses.

Larry – how many of the signs will be deployed in Acton? Mark said they haven't worked that out yet and are looking for input. Mark said there would probably be about 2 of the detailed map signs in each community.

Dave D. – important thing for the signs is to indicate where the bathrooms are.

Mike – can we get a copy of the presentation? Mark will send it to Julie and we will put it in the repository.

Mark asked the committee members if they thought the signs should include symbols or words to indicate features along the trail. Committee members seemed to be split as to whether symbols or words are best.

Dave D. – having the names of the businesses helps the businesses with regard to marketing, recognition.

Shirley – asked about one of the sample maps shown and what the budget would cover.

Mark – The EDC members should give it more thought and let Julie know their input as they (Wayfinding Project members) are meeting each week.

Mike – will the directory include historical sites? Mark said that they could be included.

Dave D. – is there an opportunity to include individual signs for historical sites?

Chris – could they work with the Historical Commission. Mark said he thought they would be meeting with the Historical Commission.

Joyce – Bathrooms are marked on the trail already. There are porta-potties at two points, supported by Friends of the BFRT. She thinks that having a directory on the trail near Donelan's would be good.

Mike asked what is the definition of business that would go on the signs, for example, would professional service businesses be included?

Dave D. suggested that including just retail and restaurants would be appropriate.

Catherine asked who controls the signs that businesses would put on or near the trail? Mark – the town. She asked if there might be a future opportunity for businesses to finance additional signs along the trail as long as they comply with the set standards.

Mark – with the directories, they can put the businesses and addresses. They can also put the distance to the services on the signs.

Dave D. – the problem might be getting everyone to agree to what should be on the signs, and what type of signs.

Mark said he is meeting with the BFRT board tonight also, so he will get their input.

Joyce said Mark should meet with The Friends of the BFRT group.

Chris – who will decide the placement of the signs. He is on the Recreation Committee. There are specific places near Nara Park that would create too much congestion.

Mark – there has been some discussion about placement and he can share the options they have discussed. They will have to figure out where specifically to place the signs. He will have more specific recommendations and some pricing that he will share with the EDC.

- Grants Update
 - Creative Economy Project
 - Business Directory Project
 - Acton Business Incubator Project

Since Julie was not here to present these, Larry informed the committee of three projects for which the town has received funding from The Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD):

Project Name: Stimulate Creative Economy with Public Art

Project Summary: The Town of Acton is pursuing grant funding for a public art program that will stimulate the creative economy by providing four local artists opportunities to create placemaking installations and to provide technical assistance to those artists to help with their long-term business planning.

Project Award: \$20,500

Project Name: Online Business Directory

Project Summary: The Town of Acton seeks funding to create an Acton Business Directory to showcase our local businesses and make it easy for those who live or work in Town to find the entertainment, products and services they need.

Project Award: \$4275

Project Name: The Acton Business Incubator

Project Summary: The Town of Acton is seeking funding to establish a Business Incubator program which provide technical assistance and grants to new businesses and existing businesses that are struggling to recover post-pandemic.

Project Award: \$66,500

- Review of meeting minutes from previous meetings
 - 21 April 2022 – approved by Dan, Dave D., Mike, Catherine. Shirley, Chris, and Larry abstained since they did not attend the April 21 meeting.
- Public participation – Joyce Reischutz, owner of Pedal Power Bike and Ski Shop and member of The Friends of the Bruce Freeman Trail

II. New/Special Business

1. EDC Positions on TM Articles (What will we say at Town Meeting?)

- Ban the Bags – Article 49
- Ban the Plastics – Article 48

There was some committee discussion about the Select Board meeting where SB members voted to recommend the two articles. EDC committee members expressed their disappointment that the memos they submitted to the Select Board members did not receive attention by the SB members during their meeting on Monday, April 25.

Dave D. would like the EDC committee to present our memo at Town Meeting as the “con” arguments for the Minimum Bag Charge bylaw. Larry’s plan is to speak against Article 49, either as an individual or as the Chair of the EDC. He presented to the committee a draft oral

presentation that he would like to give at Town Meeting to oppose Article 49 (minimum bag charge). One of the main points is “what problem is it solving?” We should include something about it being a burden on small businesses.

Dan suggested that we should refer to the bag charge as a tax, in a time of inflation, the bag charge is imposing an additional cost to consumers.

Catherine – the bylaw is imposing an administrative burden on businesses, the response of the proponents about sales tax liability was not adequate.

Larry asked the committee formally if we should speak against the bag article at Town Meeting? The committee members agreed that Larry should ask for specific time at the meeting and should speak for the EDC against Article 49.

After some discussion about whether the EDC should hand out a copy of the memo during Town Meeting, everyone agreed that we should prepare a slide instead to be shown while Larry speaks to the article. Catherine agreed to create the slide. Larry will talk to Jo-Ann Berry about getting time to speak against Article 49 and allowing for a slide. Larry will send his transcript to the members for individual comment.

Larry asked if the EDC should speak to Article 48 at the Town Meeting? Catherine suggested that we should speak to Article 48 as advocates for business. The EDC agrees with the intent of the bylaw, but wants the businesses to be supported in the implementation process.

Catherine agreed to speak about the EDC’s position on Article 48 at Town Meeting. We will also prepare a slide for this article. Dan will create a first draft of the slide for Article 48.

2. Discussion of Article 44

- Article 44 # Amend Zoning Map – 32 Wetherbee Street

The family business on Wetherbee Street would like to have the zoning changed to allow for either residential or commercial. After a brief discussion, the EDC members determined that we did not know enough about the owner’s plans for the property and that we did not feel compelled to speak for or against the article.

III. **More Regular Business**

3. Updates from members

Mike said that someone is preparing a rebuttal to the town’s proposed ban on fossil fuels and has asked for time at the Town Meeting.

Larry – two administrative details. The next meeting is scheduled for May 19. Committee members agreed that we don’t need to meet on May 19. Individual committee members can help Julie with her grant projects that have a June 30 deadline for encumbering funds.

Larry announced the Ray Yacouby will replace Derrick Chin as the Planning Board representative to the EDC.

Mike said there has been no response to his request for a committee to be set up to plan for the April 19, 2025 celebration.

ACTION ITEMS IDENTIFIED IN PREVIOUS MEETING:

Catherine will write a memo to the Select Board before their Monday, April 25 meeting to communicate the EDC position on “an act authorizing the town of Acton to establish a minimum charge for a checkout bag.” **Memo was sent to SB members and town manager on Sunday, April 24.**

Dan will write a memo to the Select Board before their Monday, April 25 meeting to communicate the EDC position on “polystyrene and disposable plastic reduction bylaw.” **Memo was sent to SB members and town manager on Sunday, April 24.**

4. Next meetings

- Thursday, 19 May 2022 – committee decided that we will not meet on this day as the town meeting takes place for two nights earlier that week
- Thursday, 2 June 2022

IV. **Consent Items**

None

Additional materials

- Draft meeting minutes from 21 April 2022
- 2022 Annual Town Meeting Warrant

<https://www.actonma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/16175>

Adjourn – 9:30 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS IDENTIFIED IN THE MEETING:

Catherine will design a slide for Article 49.

Dan will design a slide for Article 48.

Larry will speak to Jo-Ann Berry to get time for EDC to present for Articles 48 and 49 at the Town Meeting.

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