

EDC Minutes – 3 January 2013

These are the meeting minutes from the Economic Development Committee (EDC) of the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. The meeting took place on 3 January 2013 at the Acton Town Hall.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 by Nancy Dinkel.

Present: Allan Gulliver, Ann Chang, Dave Clough, David Didriksen, Derrick Chin, Dick Calandrella, Doug Tindal, Larry Kenah, Nancy Dinkel,

Missing: Chris Pappas

Minutes from the meeting of 6 December 2012 were approved.

Acton 2020 Summary

People who attended the 6 December 2012 EDC meeting with members of Acton 2020 summarized the discussion for those who were unable to attend. Doug Tindal summarized the key points.

- Acton 2020 is looking for some grant money from the state.
 - A small amount of money from the town will allow them to get a larger amount from the state,
- Their focus is on Kelley's Corner.
- They are proposing some initial design.

The committee recommended that Acton 2020 get some outside advice.

- Hire an external consultant
 - ... with no skin in the game
 - ...preferably with expertise in commercial real estate

Someone provided a useful taxonomy for all of the land making up Kelley's Corner. All land parcels fall into one of the following three buckets.

- The use of the land is already fixed.
- Plans are in place for development of the land.
- Everything else

The committee recommends that Acton 2020 examine which land parcels fall into each of these buckets, providing one view into what is possible for the future.

Agenda Items

CVS

- A set of plans has been approved by the Design Review Board (DRB)

- A drive-thru window is off the table (for now).

Drive Thru

- As a reminder, drive-thru access is allowed for banks and not allowed for all other businesses.
- There will be an article on the town warrant to remove the restrictions on drive-thru access.

Spruce Street Café

The committee is looking at Spruce Street as an example of starting a new business in Acton. (There is some question whether this is a good test case for the EDC to follow or an outlier.) Derrick Chin has been looking into this issue.

- It took approximately seven weeks for the owner to be issued an initial permit.
- This raised a concern that it would take at least as long for a second permit, allowing the use of a grill and an outside vent.
- In fact, the second permit was issued on the same day that it was requested.

This discussion raised the question of the role that EDC does play and should play with “nascent” businesses.

- The committee would need some help from the Planning Department in identifying new businesses that would benefit from the committee’s help.
- Committee members would need to commit to visit the business.

Goals

The conversation about Spruce Street Café led to a wider discussion about the EDC role and the general issue of making Acton an attractive community for new business. Several points were made and recommendations proposed.

- The process that any new business needs to follow should be simplified.
- Communication, especially from the town to EDC about new businesses, needs to be improved.
- The committee recommends that the zoning function be moved (back) to the Building Department.
 - The historians on the committee noted that moving Zoning into the Planning Department addressed problems that no longer exist.
- The committee further recommends that the approach to zoning be transformed from enforcement to compliance.

Miscellany

- Derrick Chin reported that Scott Mutch is the Zoning Enforcement Officer for Historical District Commission (HDC) as well as for the town itself.

In Closing

The meeting adjourned at 9:48.