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EDC Minutes – 24 July 2014

These are the meeting minutes from the Economic Development Committee (EDC) of the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. This special meeting took place on 24 July 2014 at the Acton Town Hall.

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

There was no public participation.

Present: Allan Gulliver, Chris Pappas, Derrick Chin, Dick Calandrella, Doug Tindal, Ken Zhou, Larry Kenah, Nancy Dinkel

Not Present: Ann Chang, Franny Osman

Visitors: Bharat Shah, David Foley

This was a special meeting with a single agenda item, Mission and Goals for the EDC.

David Foley and Bharat Shah, prospective EDC members, also attended the meeting.

Mission and Goals (2)

Doug Tindal distributed additional background material from the earlier “reboot” of the EDC in 2008. We had a lively discussion about EDC goals and projects that the EDC and others will initiate to realize these goals. The following items are key points from that discussion listed in no particular order.

- The current industrial tax base is approximately 11% of the total. It should be in the 14% to 15% range.
- The Chamber of Commerce is no longer dedicated to Acton> It is now a regional chamber serving eight towns.
- Because membership is tied to the EDC’s role, we talked briefly about the current and proposed committee makeup. Associate members are fully participating members except for quorum. (If a committee has too many full-time members, it may be difficult to realize a quorum.)
- Ken Zhou observed that all of the goals and projects from six years ago still apply. Our focus should be less on abstract goals and more on successful execution of the projects attached to the goals.
- Someone observed that sales organizations in private industry spend some time analyzing losses to determine what, if anything, the company could have done differently. We should undertake a similar activity to determine why some businesses are choosing to locate their businesses in communities other than Acton.
- On a related note, how can we compete with Westford and Littleton in attracting businesses? (The towns are different from Acton in several respects but are nearly “competitors” for new and relocating businesses.)
- Larry Kenah suggested that we spend less time talking about the business database. While the creation and maintenance of such a database is a difficult project, its definition and

requirements are relatively straightforward but will consume time better spent on less well defined goals and projects.

- We asked Chris Pappas what a town like Acton can do to attract businesses. Chris observed that it is all about the money in the form of tax incentives and related financial benefits.
- Better transportation is also an area where towns can offer enticements to prospective businesses.
- These points led to additional conversations about the role of government in economic development.
 - Government is not very good at commercial real estate development.
 - On the other hand, government can excel at removing obstacles.
- The EDC should develop a business case for sewers in West Acton.

Upcoming Meetings (10)

The next meeting will be the regularly scheduled meeting on 7 August 2014.

In Closing

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

These minutes were recorded by Lawrence J Kenah, EDC Clerk