

EDC Minutes - 2 October 2014

These are the meeting minutes from the Economic Development Committee (EDC) of the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. This meeting took place on 2 October 2014 in Room 204 of the Acton Town Hall.

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm by Nancy Dinkel.

Doug Halley, Director, Acton Health Department attended the meeting as an invited guest.

Present: Allan Gulliver, Ann Chang, Bharat Shah, David Foley, Derrick Chin,
Doug Tindal, Franny Osman, Larry Kenah, Nancy Dinkel

Not Present: Dick Calandrella

David Foley is now an official member of the Economic Development Committee. Bharat Shaw is making his way through the final approval steps. (We learned after the 2 October meeting but before these minutes were published that Bharat Shah is also an approved EDC member.)

Meeting Minutes (2)

Minutes from the EDC meetings held on 4 September and 18 September were approved.

Doug Halley (3)

Doug Halley, Director, Acton Health Department, spent some time educating the committee on sewers, especially on the issues associated with bringing sewers to West Acton Center. Doug has held various positions in town government for 36 years. He has been director of the Health Department for 27 years.

Sewers

Franny Osman pointed out that the Board of Selectmen is focusing on sewers in West Acton.

- A short term BoS goal is to deliver a timeline for sewers during the current planning year.
- A longer term goal of the BoS is to bring sewers to West Acton Village.

Here are some of the key points that emerged from our conversation with Doug Halley. We start with points that are related to economic development.

- It is unlikely that Not Your Average Joes would exist in Acton Plaza without sewers.
- The current plan is to focus on potential businesses that could move into West Acton if sewers existed.

Additional points surfaced during the conversation.

- The biggest obstacle to this project is overall cost.
 - A projected cost from ten years ago was a total cost of approximately \$12M.
 - A current estimate is more like \$22M.
- There was some discussion about private treatment plants such as exist along Route 2A.
 - Could private treatment plants be used in West Acton?

- Doug reminded us that West Acton center, unlike Route 2A, has little land for discharge.

Doug pointed out that some people are opposed to growth in West Acton. Doug offered his opinion on this.

- Zoning guidelines should be used to control issues (such as growth).
- Infrastructure (or lack of same) should not be used as a control mechanism.

Economic Development Officer

Doug indicated that he would like to see an economic development officer be added to town staff. He proposed that a meals tax could fund such a position. Several surrounding towns already impose a 0.75% meals tax. (The EDC has talked about a meals tax to fund other projects in recent meetings.) A heated discussion followed about the costs and benefits of a meals tax on existing businesses.

Board of Selectmen Report (4)

Franny Osman has been talking with businesses in Acton looking for feedback on their issues. She also suggested that committee members reach out to West Acton businesses to better understand their concerns.

In support of this suggestion, Doug Tindal mentioned that Kelley's Corner is already receiving attention from other town committees and that the EDC should adopt West Acton as its area of focus. Other committee members have suggested this in the past. Most recently, Franny Osman and Ann Chang suggested that the EDC should add its support for sewers that would allow additional economic growth in West Acton.

Acton 2020 Update (5)

Larry Kenah did not attend the Kelley's Corner Steering Committee meeting in September and was unable to present an update, other than to point out that there was a public meeting about Kelley's Corner proposals that took place on 16 September 2014.

Remaining Agenda Items (6..10)

There were no updates on agenda items 6 through 10. Work on these projects will be clarified after we go through the detailed discussion of EDC mission, goals, and projects.

In Closing

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 pm.

These minutes were recorded by Lawrence J Kenah, EDC Clerk