

EDC Minutes – 19 May 2016

These are the meeting minutes from the Economic Development Committee (EDC) of the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. The meeting took place on 19 May 2016 at the Acton Town Hall in Conference Room 204.

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 by Doug Tindal.

Present: Ann Chang, Chingsung Chang, Dave Didriksen, David Foley, Derrick Chin, Doug Tindal, Larry Kenah, Nancy Dinkel

Not present: Allan Gulliver, Bharat Shah, Dick Calandrella, Josh Fischel

Town Staff M. J. "Selby" Selby
Director of Land Use and Economic Development

This was Nancy Dinkel's last EDC meeting. We will miss her.

Meeting Summary

Public Participation (1)

There was no public participation.

Meeting Minutes (2)

Minutes from the EDC meeting of 5 May 2016 were approved.

Membership Issues (3)

Doug Tindal led a discussion about EDC membership. He described the current official makeup of the EDC.

- 2 people from BoS
- 1 member from Finance Committee
- 2 people from Planning Board
- 2 people from Chamber of Commerce

Doug observed that no other town board or committee has such a rigid structure.

He pointed out that as the Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce (MWCC) grew from an Acton-only group to represent a wider community, it adopted goals that are different from economic development. While we need to reconnect with MWCC, a chamber representative on EDC should be a goal and not a requirement.

In addition to strategic considerations, the EDC member list involves the practical requirement of reaching quorum for each meeting. We need a set of members who are committed to attending nearly every EDC meeting.

The action item that emerged from this discussion is that we will propose a less rigid structure for the EDC and bring it to the BoS.

Subcommittee Assignments (4)

Before we heard from specific subcommittees, Doug Tindal provided a brief overview of what he was looking for from each subcommittee.

- Mission of subcommittee
- Members (participants, helpers, etc)
- Project plan (who will do what work when)
- Action items (actual accomplishments)
- Calendar (or timeline)

Signs – Derrick Chin

Derrick Chin indicated that the stores located in the Stop & Shop Plaza on Route 62 would like a sign along the road that lists all tenants in the plaza. Some of the stores wanted to talk about other issues. Stop & Shop itself is concerned that a Market Basket may appear in Maynard. Dunkin' Donuts would like drive-through access. Apparently they did not understand the vote against drive through at last year's town meeting.

Ann Chang suggested that the Planning Board should completely overhaul the zoning bylaws. Such an effort would require help from external consultants but should also include people in Acton who work with the bylaws.

Business Database – Larry Kenah

Larry Kenah gave a brief update on the business database.

- Larry and Selby had a productive meeting earlier in the day.
- Selby sent Larry the list of DBAs from the clerk's office. (The list will be used as a source of business data but it needs to be cleaned of stale data and duplicate entries.)

Larry has two next steps.

- Write and deliver first draft project plan to EDC and Selby
 - Who will use the database?
 - ... for what purposes?
- Meet with Matt Frost (Director of IT)

Larry's remarks triggered a brief discussion. Dave Didriksen argued for a simple system that met the requirements of the primary users of the database. ("Don't build a tank to race in the Grand Prix.") Ann Chang mentioned that a town report from about four years ago contained a list of the oldest businesses in Acton.

Buy Local Campaign (5)

Selby gave a brief update on the Buy Local campaign in Acton. Dave Didriksen (I think) mentioned Stacey Mitchell as an advocate for buy local campaigns that we might want to learn more about. Ann Chang

asked whether the town itself or merchants are pushing any buy local effort. The consensus is that this is a merchant led effort.

EDC Connections with Other Committees (6)

There was no discussion related to this item.

Updates from Members (7)

There were several items of note that were mentioned early in the meeting.

- Not Your Average Joe's wants to add 45 outdoor seats. This will have no impact on parking requirements but their sewer fees may increase.
- The "stone building" located between Acton Wine & Spirit and Acton Medical is being remodeled to become the new home for Dunkin' Donuts currently located a little further down the parking lot near T C Lando's.
- The former home of Digital Equipment on Parker Street in Maynard may see development including a Market Basket.
- Dave Didriksen pointed out that some businesses are failing and that it is difficult for a business to get a loan.

Walker Property Committee

Toward the end of the meeting, we returned to updates from members including this topic.

A committee is being assembled to examine possible uses for the so-called Walker Property that was purchased by the town earlier this year.

This 5-acre plot was described as one of the most developable pieces of property in the town. Different people mentioned rumors about using the property for this or that purpose. The sense of the EDC is that the town sells this property for commercial development but one that is favored by the town.

Chingsung Chang is our representative from the BoS but he is also a voting member of the EDC. Chingsung volunteered to represent the EDC on this committee. His marching orders are to "find out what's going on" and to ensure that the EDC recommendations are included in the discussions.

In Closing

Upcoming Meetings

The next EDC meeting is scheduled for 2 June 2016.

Adjourn (8)

The meeting adjourned at 9:31 pm.

These minutes were recorded by Lawrence J Kenah, EDC Clerk.