

**Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes – March 2, 2020**

A meeting of the Economic Development Committee was held in the History Room in Gladys E. Kelly Public Library, 2 Lake Street, on March 2, 2020.

Present from the Committee: Vice Chairman Marc Becker; Brian Kretchman, Chris Charniak, Dennis Luukko, Town Administrator Doug Willardson (ex officio), Director of Community Development Carol Cyr (ex officio), Director of Planning and Economic Development Ann Morgan (ex officio).

Also present: Tim Bell, Carole Marchand, Jess Sabine, Bill Sabine, Victor Waskiewicz.

Vice Chairman Marc Becker called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

1. Action Items

- a. The draft minutes from January 6, 2020 were reviewed. Motion to approve the minutes as drafted made by Mr. Charniak, seconded by Mr. Kretchman. Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

2. New Business

- a. 2020 Meeting Schedule – Ms. Morgan noted that she had spoken with the Chairwoman, Angela Rowell, who asked if the Committee would be interested in conducting the meetings earlier, say 5:00 p.m. This would allow folks to attend right after their business day ended instead of going home and then having to come back out for a meeting. All agreed that an earlier start time would be beneficial.

3. Old Business

- a. Cross Business Promotion – Scavenger Hunt – Ms. Morgan noted that Ms. Rowell had done some research from other towns that done something similar. She asked that this be tabled until she could be present to review her findings. This item was tabled to the next meeting.
- b. Business Improvement District – Mr. Willardson presented information about the business properties along Main Street and East Main Street with regards to how the taxes and financing would be assessed if a BID was established. The Committee reviewed the different options and the different time frames for accruing funds that could be used for projects. He noted that the number of property owners that would have to participate by vote in order to create a district and the structure for distributing funds and how projects would be approved. A board would have to be established and projects would have to be approved by the board. It was noted that the projects for the two areas might be different in nature given the fact that East Main Street has a more residential property owners who may not want to participate. Main Street has more business property owners who may be more amenable to creating such a district. Based on projections, it might take a couple of years to accrue enough funds to develop substantial projects.

Mr. Willardson reviewed a draft letter that could be sent out to the property owners identified to see if they would be interested in exploring the concept. The Committee reviewed the letter and offered comments. It was suggested that the letter be simplified and that the property owners be given the opportunity to attend informational meetings as well as responding via a postcard indicating their interest. Mr. Willardson noted that he would reach out to some of the people who owned multiple properties to gauge their interest.

c. Grants / Studies

1. Market Analysis: Mr. Willardson updated the Committee noting that the consultants have identified three specific sites for further investigation and future action. He noted that staff is working with the consultants to develop strategies. A copy of the current report will be emailed to the Committee for their review.

2. Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Grant Submission - Wayfinding / Branding: no new information is available on the status of the grant which was submitted to the State. Mr. Willardson noted that sometimes it takes a while to hear back from the State on these types of grants. Ms. Morgan noted that she would send the map of the area submitted with the grant via email to the Committee.
3. Other grants / funding opportunities: Mr. Willardson reviewed the Massachusetts Vacant Storefronts Program offered by the Massachusetts Office of Business Development. He had applied for designation of an area along Main Street between Chase Street and the intersection of North Main and East Main Streets to receive status as a Certified Vacant Storefront District. Several vacant storefronts along Main Street are currently eligible for funding. Property owners can apply to the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council for tax credits and the Town offers assistance as well which is required as part of the program. It was noted that this is a very new program and many of the details and application process are still being worked out by the State.

d. Events – Past & Upcoming

1. Ms. Marchand provided an update on upcoming events sponsored by the Town and through the Recreation Department.
2. Other site visit location recommendations – Ms. Morgan noted that she would be contacting the City of Northampton to better understand why the Business Improvement District was disbanded in favor of a downtown association.


4. Staff Update

- a. Conflict of Interest / Open Meeting Law: Member Receipts, Training


5. Next Meeting – April 1, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. Location to be determined.

6. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Becker, seconded by Mr. Charniak. Motion passed unanimously, 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.



Ann Morgan, Recording Secretary



Date