



These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 3/4/21, held remotely at 7 pm

Called to Order: 7:03 pm

Members Present: Mike Majors, Ann Chang, Josh Fischel, Larry Kenah, Jon Benson (liaison), Dan Malloy, Catherine Usoff, David Cote, David Didriksen, Derrick Chin

Staff Present: Selby (Economic Development Director)

Members Absent: Peter Daniel, Shirley Ming

Regular Business

1. Review of meeting minutes from previous meetings

Minutes from February 18th are approved, with one parenthetical aside removed, unanimously, 8-0, with one abstention.

2. Public participation

There are three members of the public in attendance; none raise their hands to participate at this point.

II. New/Special Business

3. Proposal for Economic Development Committee (Dan Malloy and Catherine Usoff)

Catherine and Dan worked collaboratively on this proposal; they were charged by Larry at the previous meeting to come up with a plan. They met with Selby to establish a protocol that would support him, and tried to find a way to act on the committee's general desire to be more proactive. Catherine explains that they proposed an order of priority for three commercial projects: 50 Nagog Park, vacant storefront inventory and promotion, and revision of the Town of Acton website to bolster economic development and marketing. Following that work, they additionally propose a list of research and information items, and areas where we can participate or represent Acton in town activities and local partnerships.

Dan suggests that subcommittees of 1-3 people inform monthly meetings and that the EDC then acts as a steering committee.

Josh wonders about Open Meeting Laws; Larry explains that as long as we stay under quorum (four people), then we're fine.

Ann Chang voices support for this idea, suggesting that it could light a fire under the committee, and encourages us to insert ourselves where we can really make a difference, prioritizing 50 Nagog Park over KMart, where the size of our influence is probably more minimal.

Larry agrees with Ann's criteria for prioritization.

David Cote says that he likes the template—that it'll make it easier for us to make an impact and move our work forward. He suggests that there are metrics by which we assess each priority in terms of impact, timeline, amount of coordination—something to whittle down our work and make everything more doable.

David Didriksen endorses the concept; he has a couple of bones to pick: he wants the town to hire a marketing firm to do a professional job on the website. He also has suggestions on content about the Great Road proposal.

Mike Majors wonders how the nine proposed projects are aligned with the goals of the town and Selby's fiefdom.

Dan says these nine are, in fact, based principally on Selby's input.

Mike responds, "Awesome, awesome." His delightful dog shows his agreement by allowing Mike to give him scratchies.

Selby says that he does need the support of a committee to help him achieve the economic development plans that comprise just part of his job title.

Larry informally adopts this as the way we'll do business moving forward. The committee feels the urge to vote. We unanimously support the proposal to structure our meetings moving forward.

Catherine suggests there should be "another pass on this to refine it" in order to combine some items and make the work more manageable. She likes David's idea of metrics (his suggested list: level of effort, impact, timeline, visibility, coordination required, barriers, and outsourceability). She and Dan and Selby will meet again to do that.

We discuss nuts and bolts.

4. Marketing the Town of Acton (Selby)

Selby says there are some opportunities related to existing projects. The Housing Implementation Project (last presentation: June, 2019) is being brought in for a landing; Judy _____ has offered to provide marketing sheets for us. Selby would like to produce one for manufacturing and one for life sciences, and he suggests a few sample companies. David D. reiterates again that there are professional companies that do promotions and marketing, and that we shouldn't do

A company called CGI that produced a series of one-minute videos for the town website has also offered to provide banners that businesses could purchase to put up and gain exposure.

David D. is a bit gunshy about this proposal due to past experiences; he feels it could give the town a cluttered look, and that we should be looking outside the town's borders to convince people to come shop in our town. We don't need to convince our own residents to shop locally.

Ann Chang remembers that negotiation for the existing banners took a long time. She agrees that there's the potential for the banners to look tacky when we're supposed to be beautifying these areas.

Selby says he's not aware of a lot of poles that are banner ready.

Ann isn't sure it's worth angering the Historic District Committee (HDC) over this.

Mike Majors thinks there's some potential for this to not be terrible, but he voices some skepticism, too.

David C. wonders what a professional marketing firm would steer us towards using these banners for.

Selby says that he will research what these banners might look like in other communities.

5. Three RFPs (Selby)

3 School Street (the Civil Defense Building)—the Writers' Loft in Sherborn is interested in purchasing, doing some renovating, and holding writing space and events. The owner of the vacant lot next store also thinks he has a potential buyer.

26 Carlisle Road (a tax title property)—a tear-down, single-family home; it would require demolition. They did some soil testing. The goal

4 Piper Lane—6 acres, added to the Great Hill conservation land. It's called the "James Tuttle Barn" and is listed as an historic home; it would need to be relocated. Selby doesn't think this will generate any interest.

Ann Chang asks about the value of the lumber of the barn at 4 Piper Lane (Selby says that could be in the pipeline). She also asks about the South Acton Village Plan with regard to 3 School Street plans.

III. More Regular Business

6. Updates from members

Derrick Chin asks Selby about the ol' Willow Books building; what's happening with it? Selby responds that it is still in the build-out phase, to be an Asian market with an attached restaurant with a small number of seats.

Ann Chang asks about the same property—she's been talking with the actual business owner (who also owns Ginger Court). Selby suggests she might know more before he does.

Ann also talks about the meeting she attended about 19-21 Maple Street. The plan, via a company associated with Corey York, is to knock down one building; the one that's historic could be good for a coffee shop and has space for a variety of options. There are two options that this group wants to pursue. There are 61 parking spaces; Ann suggested electric charging stations. It will be fully landscaped. The group feels that people will eventually return to the commuter rail. Abutters felt worried about the increase in traffic.

Larry wonders about the process for website upgrading. A redesign of the entire town website or a separate website for the EDC would require approval from the Town Manager.

7. Update from Director of Economic Development

33 Nagog Park is under purchase and sale by a non-profit called Love All, Serve All. They would continue to lease out to the analytic laboratory that currently exists there.

The A-B Islamic Center is looking to relocate to 3 Nagog Park.

50 Nagog Park was sold at auction for \$600,000—11 acres and a building. That has a special permit from the Select Board to tear that building down. Edwards Vacuum, a British company, chose to relocate to a space with a city council model (Haverhill) instead of waiting for our town meeting to lumber along to approve a tax incentive for them.

Kristen Guichard applied for a grant through the state's Local Rapid Recovery Program—she received one for \$60,000 to improve the business climate along Great Road.

8. Next meeting – 18 March 2021

IV. Consent Items

9. None

Meeting is adjourned at 8:24 pm.

Additional materials

- Draft meeting minutes from 18 February 2021
- 2021 EDC Planning and Committee Structure (proposed)

The listed agenda items are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair. Not all items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

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For more information about the Economic Development Committee, please send email to
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