



Economic Development Committee Minutes

10 March 2023

12 noon

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 3/10/23, held virtually via of Zoom.

Called to Order: 12:05 pm

EDC Members Present: Catherine Usoff, Dan Malloy, Shirley Ming, Ann Chang, Mike Majors
(Joined 30 mins late)

Also present: Julie Pierce, Fran Arsenault

Public Participation: James Fuccione, Michael Carpenter

Members Absent: David Didriksen, David Cote

Preliminaries

Call the Roll – attendance is noted above

The preamble about the open meeting requirements was read which define rules of participation for Zoom participants. The version of the preamble read was the one developed for Town of Acton Board and Committees, “Script for Remotely Conducted Meetings.”

1. Regular Business

- Review of meeting minutes from previous meetings

Feb 3 2023 minutes were approved by all members in attendance at the time of voting. Mike Majors joined after the vote was taken.

2. New/Special Business

- **Warrant article about firearms businesses (see relevant document in repository)**

EDC generally supports the article as they did not see anything that prevents an eligible business from locating in the specified area in town. EDC members did not feel the need to take any position on the proposed article.

Mike C. suggested that the bylaw should include a requirement to meet with fire and police for regular check (annually, perhaps) regarding safety matters. Ann commented that a manager change will require a certification change.

- **Next steps regarding EDC warrant article (Catherine and Dan)**

The warrant article was presented to the Select Board by Dan and to the Finance Committee by Catherine. It was favorably received by both bodies with the exception of one member of the Finance Committee.

The goal of the proposed article is for economic development to be top of mind for town leadership and to ensure that the issue of economic development has some prominence in the upcoming town master plan. There are no specific projects identified in the proposed article, or details about what should be included in a plan, only that a plan should be developed.

James F. suggested that the EDC tie the request for a plan to other activities already underway, such as the South Acton Vision and Planning project.

Mike C. provided the following suggestion for inclusion in a future presentation or literature related to the proposed article:

“A strategic economic development plan is a vital tool for Acton to ensure that the priorities set by our elected officials are aligned with the town economic development goals which we have collaboratively developed. As a result, Acton’s economic strategies have clear direction and guidance and our town government is held accountable to meet Acton’s economic development needs.”

Julie commented that goal is have leadership consent first and then resource allocations can follow to work toward agreed upon goals and priorities.

General discussion followed regarding the need to find ways to promote the article and encourage voter turnout at town meeting. Businesses appear to be supportive but few local business owners are Acton residents, and therefore, they cannot vote at town meeting. One idea is to distribute flyers and/or posters to businesses to let their Acton customers know that the article is on the agenda and encourage more participation at town meeting, as well as support of the article.

- **Consider ways to support RH Adhesives (Catherine and Julie)**

Mike Carpenter introduced his business, and an issue he is having with regard to permission to maintain storage capacity on his property. RH Adhesives has been in business since 1949, manufacturing special purpose adhesives (e.g., for pool repair as well as industrial tarp repair). The company has nine employees, with 90% of their products sold in U.S, and the other 10% sold outside the country.

With Covid and the resulting supply chain shortages, the company needed more storage space for inventory in order to stay in business. A few years ago, they added some concrete footings into solid ground and placed shipping containers on top of them. After the fact, Mike became aware that there were various permitting issues related to ground water, conservation buffer zone and construction within 100 yards of flood zone with planning board, conservation committee and zoning board of appeals. Mike became

aware of these issues as a result of inviting the town planner and an environmental employee to the company's site to see what improvements he could make to his property to ameliorate environmental and drainage issues. Mike will go through the process laid out by Kristen Guichard, town planner to work through the permitting issues. He hopes that they can find a favorable resolution that results in improving the site as he intended while also being able to maintain the storage capacity which is vital to the success of his business.

There was general agreement among EDC members that the town should work with Mike to come to a favorable resolution given that this is a valuable long-lived business that brings employment and favorable recognition to the town. They should consider that the company's goal is to improve the overall site, and to be ecofriendly.

EDC will lend its general support to RH Adhesives through a letter and/or appearance at hearings when they are scheduled.

- **Report on Acton Business Tour (Julie and Dan)**

Julie summarized that the business tour was very well received and she will use feedback to create the How to Do Business Guide and a Checklist for new businesses. The biggest issues for business owners were requirements of the Historic District Commission, lack of effective waste water solutions, and the sign bylaws.

Twenty-six businesses participated in the tour at the various stops and 40 additional owners provided feedback. Various town department employees and elected officials participated.

Dan added that the introduction of dedicated economic development director is appreciated by businesses. Some businesses lamented that town meeting doesn't have business representation and they don't feel they are being heard. They love the customer base in Acton and want to remain here.

Mike C. suggested to have a centralized "welcome to Acton" information sheet with list of items to be aware of when business moves to town.

- **Green Advisory Council (Senator Eldridge) updates – read in repository (Julie)**

This is a regional group spearheaded by State Senator Jamie Eldridge. The items may have impact at state level. The recent meeting was the first they have held in person since the pandemic. Julie attended partly to see if there were economic development considerations discussed by attendees. She did not hear much mention of the impacts on business or about economic development in general.

- **Green Advisory Board Acton – upcoming items for EDC to consider**

The EDC read a draft letter from the Green Advisory Board (GAB) to the Select Board about the Specialized Opt-in component of the revised Stretch Code for building regulations. The members agreed that we should see if their letter/info evolves after the

next meeting of the GAB on 3/15/23.

Mike M. has a meeting with Jim Snyder-Grant about the environmental proposals on the Town Meeting Warrant. Mike would like the GAB and/or Select Board to cost analyses for these proposals.

Shirley commented that the cost should be categorized into construction and ongoing usage cost.

- **Other warrant articles to consider**

Petition to change the sewer commissioners.

- **New survey for Great Road Complete Streets**

EDC members should complete the survey ASAP and the Consultants are coming to April's meeting to present to us. Fran and Ann volunteered to help raise awareness among business owners, by handing out flyers to encourage them to attend the next EDC meeting.

- **Updates from Economic Development Director**

The West Acton lighting was added as proposed by the Economic Development Director. The Planning Department can come to the June EDC meeting to give an overview of the Planning Department and changes they anticipate that relate to the work of the EDC.

- **South Acton Vision and Planning Advisory Group (Catherine)-**

Catherine shared how impressed she was with the process being used by the planning department on this project. You can view the townwide survey and boards

here: <https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/south-acton-plan/>

- **New businesses**

Salted Soul, Salt Caves and Wellness Center is scheduled to open up in the Acton Woods Plaza in March.

Adjourned at 1:47pm.

Action Items Identified in this Meeting:

- Follow up on EDC warrant article, which includes editing the presentation, planning outreach, member participation at town meeting, and anticipating questions and having answers prepared.
- Provide letter of support for RH Adhesives when needed.

For more information about the Economic Development Committee, please send email to EDC@actonma.gov