

EDC Minutes – 16 July 2015

These are the meeting minutes from the Economic Development Committee (EDC) of the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. The meeting took place on 16 July 2015 at the Acton Town Hall in Room 204.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 by Dick Calandrella.

Present: Allan Gulliver, Ann Chang, Chingsung Chang, David Foley, Derrick Chin, Dick Calandrella, Doug Tindal, Larry Kenah

Not present: Bharat Shah, Josh Fischel, Nancy Dinkel

Summary

Public Participation (1)

There was no public participation.

Meeting Minutes (2)

The minutes from the EDC meeting on 2 July 2015 were approved with two minor changes related to the section dealing with the Historic District Commission.

Board of Selectmen Report (3)

34 Elm Street

Chingsung talked briefly about the proposed building project at 34 Elm Street. This development of 12 homes will include a group home for Minuteman ARC (serves individuals of all ages with specific developmental disabilities).

Special Town Meeting

We spent considerable time discussing the proposed purchase of the so-called Walker Property by the town for \$1.8M. In particular, we asked whether the EDC should take a position.

Discussion

The purchase price includes approximately \$1.2M to purchase the land and an additional \$0.6M to settle the lawsuit. People mentioned possible municipal uses of the land including a new senior center. The EDC recommended against such a use and also against using the land for housing.

The money would come from the stabilization fund established at the Spring 2015 Town Meeting. It requires a 2/3 vote at town meeting to move money into or out of the stabilization fund.

Additional discussion points are reflected in the final draft of the EDC position.

EDC Position

After some discussion, we agreed that the EDC support the purchase. Doug Tindal agreed to present the EDC position at the special town meeting on 4 August 2015. Here is the complete EDC position.

The Economic Development Committee (EDC) supports the purchase of the so-called Walker Land by the Town of Acton.

- Once the town owns the land, it controls its future use.
- Because the property is a valuable commercial tract, the EDC recommends against using this land for municipal purposes (such as a new location for the senior center).
- When developed commercially, this land will be a valuable addition to the town's commercial tax base, relieving some pressure on the residential tax base.
- Because the town owns the property, it gets to choose what project eventually develops the land.

Re-Organization of the EDC (4)

Dick Calandrella noted that the expiration dates for nearly all members are June 2017. The terms should be staggered across three years. Dick will sort this out with the clerk's office.

Acton 2020 Update (5)

Larry Kenah provided a brief report from the most recent meeting of the Kelley's Corner Steering Committee that had taken place on the previous morning.

- The committee is awaiting a draft report from the consultants.
- The key messages of the report will focus on
 - More town control of development earlier in the process
 - Reduced traffic congestion
 - Improved safety and accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Discussions continued to focus on the details of the proposed zoning changes.

Mission and Goals and Objectives (6)

We observed that the document will serve as background material for upcoming discussions with Steve Ledoux and the Economic Development Director. We need to extract the key messages from the document. The committee assigned the development of the key messages to Allan Gulliver, David Foley, and Larry Kenah.

Town Businesses Database Update (7)

In the context of the continuing discussion about a business database, we noted that this project, along with others, will only be worked on if we as a committee decide that it "makes the cut" as part of our mission and goals exercise. Doug Tindal recommended that we should discuss this project with the ED Director and ask for help from the town. (Previous attempts to create such a database have shown that it cannot be worked on solely by volunteers in our spare time.)

Historic District Commission Sign Bylaw Progress (8)

David Foley brought us up to date on the HDC and sign bylaws.

- As the new chair of the HDC, David is working his way through lots of paperwork.

- He learned that lots of applications were approved but not executed.
- There will be no sign bylaw changes presented at Fall Town Meeting.
- The HDC will work on its backlog first.

David also met with Marc Foster who owns the building on the corner (Red, White, and Brew; art store; dry cleaner; driving school; etc). This person described his list of problems in West Acton: sewers, traffic, etc). David would like to invite him to an upcoming EDC meeting. Ann Chang would like to get him involved.

Ease of Doing Business (10)

There was no action on this item.

Upcoming Meetings (11)

In Closing

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 pm.

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