

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 11/30/2016, held in Room 9 of Acton Town Hall.

Present: Larry Kenah, Dave Didriksen, David Foley, Ann Chang, Josh Fischel, Doug Tindal, Matt "Selby" Selby, Derrick Chin & Chingsung Chang

Absent: None

Called to Order: 7:35 pm

I. Kelley's Corner Update: Larry Kenah reported on the first Kelley's Corner Meeting in six months, sharing a few suggestions that guests of that committee had had for use of the current K-Mart property.

II. Approval of Minutes: As the **minutes were read**, Dave Didriksen described in broad strokes an idea for a Buy Local campaign, in which local businesses/merchants would take some percentage of receipts from an appointed period of time on a particular day and make a donation to a central town fund, a large percentage of the money going to the schools. "It's constantly being done on an individual basis, but not collectively," Dave said. As the committee reflected on this, the **minutes were approved unanimously**.

III. Discussion of Role of Potential Local Business Ombudsman: Doug Tindal suggested that Dave could fill this role; Dave demurred, and said he was not making decisions about anything until after the Christmas season. The committee continued its discussion of the Buy Local campaign—how long would be needed to put 'Acton Day' together? when would be the best time of year to do it?—but did not reach any hard and fast conclusions, other than that putting it off too far in the distance would just lead to kicking the can further down the road. Larry said, "What we're doing now is discussing the details of the Buy Local campaign before the guy we're asking to lead it has even drafted the broad outline of a plan for it." [Clerk's question: Is the ombudsman role separate from someone kicking off a Buy Local campaign?]

IV. Bigger Issues: Dave moved conversation to where the committee, having "gone dark for a while," goes from here. He talked about how to structure its composition differently. "We're at a turning point for this committee," he said, observing that Acton does not have a large commercial base, and that the last few years had been really tough for small businesses. "We still haven't completely recovered from 2008." By way of describing what's made the climate stay difficult, Dave brought up the consolidation of wholesalers, at least in the bookselling business, and inspectors who seemed to act on personal animus. On the latter point, there was some back and forth between Dave, David Foley, and Selby about how to clear up simple misunderstandings about regulation compliance; David suggested a sit-down between town and business stakeholders to identify timelines, work flow, names for accountable parties, and dates by which they need to execute; Selby said, "There are no delays from the inspector side. The delays are typically contractor-based." The conversation boiled down to whether the role of the sit-down is covered by a general contractor; David suggested that a sit-down orchestrated by the town would allow all interested parties beyond the contractor and the inspector (the HDC, for instance), to check their necessary boxes and avoid further hassle for all involved. Selby said he wanted to create a guide to help businesses navigate all the steps of setting up, "but every

project is going to be different.” Ann Chang argued that the role David was describing was already Selby’s job.

V. The Omnipod: The conversation moved to a specific deal that’s been on Selby’s plate—an example of a special case in which he has involved himself. Insulet, a company leasing their headquarters in Billerica, wants to move their entire operations to 100 Nagog Park, where they want to occupy a building that’s been vacant for 15 years. (Their manufacturing is currently in China.) Selby coordinated a meeting between all interested parties. Details of the deal—the sale, using a tax-increment financing (TIF) as a tax incentive (as opposed to a special tax assessment (STA))—were discussed. The deal would need to go before Town Meeting, as the company would need to have zoning amendments to expand the building as they plan to do, and the Town Meeting would also have to approve the tax break. Derrick Chin and Doug suggested outreach and public hearings well in advance of Town Meeting, which the Town did not do enough of in advance of trying (and failing) to get an STA approved for another company looking to re-locate to Acton last year.

VI. Walker Study Committee: There was discussion, based on a report from EDC members who attended the latest meeting of this group, about whether they should spend \$18,000 on a landscape architect to generate concept plans when the Walker Committee is not yet sure of what it wants to do with the property.

VII. Committee Re-Structuring: After years of devoted service, keen insight, and countless tales of local government, Doug Tindal has decided to resign from the EDC (and, thus, as Chair). We will miss his leadership: the joy with which he engaged with this work, and the tenacity with which he credibly argued a point.

Doug supported Larry Kenah as the next Chair, and it was thus voted upon, like so:

Ann Chang **MOVED** that Larry Kenah become the new Chair of the EDC, and Josh Fischel become a full member and Clerk, pending approval by the Board of Selectmen. (*Passed unanimously*)

There was further discussion about how many members should be on the committee, and where we should draw them from. How many from Planning Board? How many from FinCom? The sense of the room was that a leaner EDC—7 full members, say—would allow for a more nimble EDC, and one that would have an easier time establishing a quorum at each meeting. There was a suggestion that we could have members from among a menu of committees rather than requiring someone from committee x or y. Chingsung Chang described a situation whereby the EDC maintained a list of associate members from specific committees to maintain a relationship with those groups without requiring them to be at every meeting unless there was something pertinent on the agenda.

VIII. Progress Report from Larry Kenah on Business Inventory: Marcy Kenah, Allan Gulliver, and Larry have collectively visited about 150 businesses so far. This has included anything open to the public for walk-ins, basically—anything on main corridors. Here, we should

note the work of Allan Gulliver, even though he does not even live in Acton at the moment. If the EDC could re-write all the rules, we would make it so he were able to seamlessly continue to volunteer on this committee.

IX: New Business: The EDC will not meet in December; we will look to meet again—regularly—in the New Year.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:40 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Josh Fischel