

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 7/6/2017, held in Room 9 of Acton Town Hall. (The “When Larry’s Away, the EDC Will Play” edition.)

Present: Selby, David Foley, Peter Daniel, Chingsung Chang, Josh Fischel, Dave Didriksen, Ann Chang, Derrick Chin, Mike Majors

Absent: Larry Kenah

Called to Order: 7:33 pm

## I. Public Participation

There is none of that.

## II. Minutes

Minutes approved—unanimously! There is much joy in the heart of your Clerk.

## III. Discussion Topics

- Ann Chang recaps the 348-364 Main Street and EDC public forum. The next step for Selby is to contact innkeepers to gauge their interest in developing one in Acton. Is it economically viable? Options 4 (the inn) and 5 (a nursery/open space option) garnered the most momentum, with a housing option a somewhat distant third. Dave Didriksen pushed back with a bit of cold water on the feasibility of opening an inn with so few rooms—there’s a lot of cost to break ground and do permits—but there’s also the problem of whether the community (and the sewer) would support a larger hotel.

6.5% of the housing in town qualifies as 40B; there was skepticism that we would ever get to our necessary allotment.

Dave suggests our approach is backwards: why come up with dreams first and then find businesses to “fit the fantasy”? Ann says this committee was trying to avoid that with their visioning process. Selby says one thing we could do is discount the land cost of building and enter into a long-term lease with whomever; Dave is skeptical that that would be the particular barrier.

It was noted that the level of discourse at the meeting was quite civil, aided by the consultant putting forth several proposals, and people listening and offering support for pieces of the five ideas.

David Foley offers the idea of a conference space: easy access from Route 2, relatively easy access from 495, etc.

Next actions: that committee will reconvene in August to start working out a plan to present at Town Meeting in December.

- Restaurant seating limits: Mike Majors brings this up as a potential issue. There are restrictions on some of our restaurants, and he’s had a few conversations with folks at **Legend Café** and at **True West**. The owner at **Legend** can’t expand his hours or seating due to septic limitations, even though he uses about half the amount of water as the previous tenant at that location. Title 5 is a state regulation, so, unfortunately, he may not have a lot of options. David points out that he also likely has parking limitations.

At this point, there are a few simultaneous conversations. Your humble clerk tried to listen and describe both simultaneously, but ultimately unsuccessfully. The myriad

threads involved Blackbird Café and sewers in West Acton. Selby points out that zoning and Town Meeting are better vehicles than the EDC for expanding restaurant seating limits.

Mike suggests surveying restaurants in town, and seeing what their maximum allowable seating capacity is versus what their seating is in reality. Selby says that the health department folks do not go around counting seats; Dave suggests this could be facilitated by our ongoing town business survey. No further action is proposed by/for us at this time.

- Kelley's Corner infrastructure improvements: There are general concerns about the number of housing units being added. Bike lanes and turning lanes are part of the plan. Ann says we no longer have the budget for constructing all of this; Selby points out that our traffic improvements would largely be funded by state and federal grants in 2022.

We took a field trip allllll the way to the hallway to examine the map of the traffic improvements at Kelley's Corner. The expansion of lanes at the intersection between Route 27 and Massachusetts Avenue is concerning. There was consternation about the expansion of bike lanes. "Can't streets just be for cars?" says Dave (who is an avid cyclist).

Dave is also not a fan of eminent domain; "it is morally indefensible" to seize a business's property for the expansion of lanes.

I brought up the idea of a cross-easement between Bueno and Bowl-a-drome to ease some traffic and expand parking options for both businesses. Selby is not sure if we can force a cross-easement. Chingsung Chang asks why we don't just have service road access at Sorrento's and CVS and eliminate all the curb cuts in between?

Dave asks if any local business owners or landlords have been at any of the meetings; the committee has met with everyone but Marvin Gould, the owner of the Starbucks building.

The exploration of whether to officially oppose eminent domain as an EDC is something we may bring up at a future meeting.

There is concern amongst the EDC that Kelley's Corner risks becoming perceived as a behemoth of cost and logistics. Dave wants there to be business owners who are on the steering committee; otherwise, they may be headed towards "a humiliating defeat" at Town Meeting.

Derrick Chin suggests a discussion forum for businesses, perhaps facilitated by the EDC. Dave wants us to meet with the Kelley's Corner committee itself.

David concludes by advising that an agenda item for our August meeting be what the EDC should do in terms of an official position with regard to Kelley's Corner.

#### IV. Updates from Members

Ann will likely be on the West Acton Sewer Committee. Needless to say, we are all flush with excitement for her.

Derrick attended a School Committee meeting. “Things are out of control,” and they’re damaging their own credibility. When Derrick said they’re talking about an override, Mike Majors added that there was also mention of a debt exclusion, which could add up to \$1600 to your tax bill.

On July 24th, the Board of Selectmen meeting will have Brookside Shops on the agenda. Trader Joe’s wants a delivery time of 5:45 for produce, but they’re already currently violating the 6:30 time limit.

Dave says that there is a “retail armageddon” going on nationwide.

Chingsung says he’s spending time about Concord-related water stuff, and he can’t talk about the particulars (or particulates?) yet.

#### **V. Update from Selby**

He went to the EACC meeting; the TIF for Insulet was approved by the state at that, so that’s going forward, and their building permit has been approved, too. There will be a groundbreaking ceremony in the nearish future.

Banzan, a Chinese company, bought 15 Craig Road (light industrial zoning) last spring; they went looking for a building for a US presence. They do research and development and have been in operation for a year. Then, they got a hazardous materials use permit from the town, but it’s in the groundwater protection district, so that’s a no-go. To Selby, it seems odd to have an industrial zoning area in one of more protected districts. He will add this information to his guide for prospective businesses.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

We are done at 9:20 pm.