



These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 1/16/20, held in Room 9 of Acton Town Hall at 7 pm

Called to Order: 7:00 pm

Members Present: Mike Majors, Derrick Chin, Josh Fischel, Ann Chang, Larry Kenah, Shirley Ming, Peter Daniel, Dave Didriksen, Jon Benson (arrives at 7:14)

Town Staff: Selby

Members Absent: David Foley

I. Minutes: The minutes from December 5, 2019, are unanimously approved, with a few typographical clarifications.

We are also officially caught up with minutes from January 17, 2019. These are unanimously approved as well.

II. New/Special Business:

Starting a Business in Acton: Andy Richardt, West Side Creamery in West Acton

This was the first time Andy had opened a business. He dealt with the Historic District Commission for sign approval, the Health Division, the Building Division, the Architectural Access Board at the state level, and the Planning Division to apply for the sign and the awning (separate forms and fees). They were led through all this by our contractors and landlord. There were hurdles along the way, but after roughly \$650 in town fees, they were able to open. David Didriksen shared his own similarly daunting experiences of “serving 15 masters” when opening Willow Books 23 years ago. Andy said there are six owners of the shop, so they could divide and conquer on these sort of tasks. Local contractors who know the ropes and hoops associated with working with the town made the process easier. Andy made mention of the guide to doing business in Acton later in this agenda, and said such a document would have been very helpful. They signed their lease in September, and opened the following mid-March.

Peter also shared his experiences of opening Rapsallion locations in Acton, Concord, and Sturbridge; Sturbridge was the easiest of the three. He served as his own general contractor in Concord, which he wouldn't have done in retrospect.

Andy said they're limited in the amount they can produce and the number of seats they can have due to the lack of sewers in West Acton. They don't bake, and that's a service they would likely produce with sewers—though not if the cost is prohibitive. Limited parking is also an issue that may discourage people from driving.

Larry suggests that it become a regular practice to invite business owners to come talk about what it's like to work with the town, and what it's like to run a business here in Acton. Ann suggests inviting people remaining in Gould's Plaza, since the businesses there are struggling. Selby suggests that sewerage Route 2A is the primary solution.

III. Updates From Members

David worried that, at Town Meeting, we attached ourselves to something that ultimately may have hurt our credibility. When we vote to support something, we ought to do more

research about its costs and impact.

Ann Chang felt that David Martin should have had a chance to respond to the West Acton group's opposition presentation.

Larry returns us to a general question going forward, which David revises: as a matter of civic conscience, we should do due diligence before we commit our support or opposition to it. David said the letter the town sent to West Acton property owners was pushy and obnoxious, and it drove a movement against sewers.

Jon Benson would like to pull back to a community-wide discussion of wastewater management. He and David strongly advocated for consensus building and talking with neighbors to learn if there's an appetite for a particular proposal before plowing ahead with it.

There is a discussion about what's next on January 27th at the Board of Selectmen's meeting.

Larry Kenah asks for feedback on his draft of the annual report. The committee provided it.

Mike Majors brings up a post from the Acton Parents group on Facebook, about what kind of restaurants people might want and where they might want them. He will try to pass the link along.

There's also talk of naming Community Way after Carroll Spinney, and then there would be a Big Bird presence at a park nearby there.

Updates from Director of Economic Development

There is an RFP out for the Civil Defense Building in South Acton. Proposals are due on February 28th; the most likely bidder is a next-door owner, who wants to join it to his property to do something with both spaces.

We're beginning to brainstorm a series of shorts to promote economic development—a welcome from the Town Manager, one about civic organizations, resources and sustainability, etc.

At the Chamber of Commerce meeting this week, Selby learned that there are now three empty storefronts in Gould's Plaza. Elements and Pier One are vacating the Staples & Trader Joe's Plaza.

50 Nagog Park, next to Insulet, was sold for cheap (it was bought for \$600,000; previously, it was sold for \$12 million).

IX. Adjourn @ 9:02 pm.

The EDC will next meet on February 6, 2019

Materials Reviewed During Meeting:

- Draft EDC Minutes from January 17, 2019
- Draft EDC Minutes from December 5, 2019
- EDC Agenda for January 16, 2020
- Draft of EDC 2019 Annual Report