



Economic Development Committee Minutes

8 September 2022

7:00 pm

Room 9, Acton Town Hall
472 Main Street, Acton, MA

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 9/8/22, held in Room 9 of Acton Town Hall, supported by Zoom participation for guests.

Called to Order: 7:12 pm

EDC Members Present: Mike Majors, Catherine Usoff, Shirley Ming, David Cote (Zoom), David Didriksen

Also present: Fran Arsenault; Julie Pierce Onos

Members Absent: Dan Malloy, Peter Daniel, Ann Chang, Ray Yacouby

Preliminaries

Call the Roll – attendance is noted above

1. Regular Business

- Review of meeting minutes from previous meetings

7 July 2022, minutes approved by all members in attendance except Dave Cote, who was not in attendance yet at the time.)

- Public participation – None

2. New/Special Business

Membership and Meetings

The committee has two openings for associate members.

Meeting time is still decided to be first Thursday of each month in person and if anything urgent, a second meeting could be held in a particular via Zoom. The specific day and time for a second meeting is TBD as Catherine has a board meeting on the third Thursday of each month.

Revised committee descriptions.

Approved by all members in attendance.

See supporting doc named “[Proposed EDC Charge](http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-15608)” at <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-15608>

Discussion Items:

We want to identify business participation for the two vacancies that the committee has open. It is generally hard to get existing business owners due to the time small business owners need to commit for work.

Fran and Julie commented that the recent ribbon cutting for Borges Martial Arts at Acton Woods plaza was a great event.

South Acton village Vision and Planning Advisory Group

- Catherine joined the group as an EDC rep and she is a south Acton resident.
- An existing South Acton Village plan needs to be revisited in context of several things that have happened since it was created. Factors that will affect a new planning process include: the success of the West Acton Villageworks, Kelley’s Corner revitalization, Climate Action Plan, and a new state regulation (Section 3A of MGL c. 40A, Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA communities).
- NOTE added by Catherine, some potentially helpful resources regarding Section 3A: <https://www.mhp.net/news/2022/correcting-some-misconceptions-about-the-states-new-zoning-law-for-mbta-communities>
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities>
http://homenewshere.com/middlesex_east/article_95704ce8-b689-11ec-8fa9-8f3bb29c4192.html
- Because all zoning change requires town meeting vote, the timeline for Section 3A compliance includes a re-zoning vote at town meeting in 2024.
- Dave D. commented that it sounds similar to “smart growth” that was proposed in the past, which is not really suitable for suburban communities. We should have more parking, not more housing so that people in the area can commute. The town should not rubber stamp the state regulation and it is also important to know how much state funding is at stake if the town does not comply.
- Julie encourages the participation of EDC members in Advisory Group activities. The advisory group will put a survey out early October, and a postcard will be sent to every Acton resident to inform them about the planning process and seeking broad input.

EDC priorities

Catherine had a meeting with Fran, and Town Staff, Julie from Economic Development Kristen from Planning, Andrea from Sustainability to understand their priorities for the year.

See supporting doc named “[EDC Document to Support Planning for 2022-23 9-7-22.docx](http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-15608)” at <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-15608>

EDC needs to prioritize based on the understanding of related projects/goals that are going on.

Proposed Areas of Focus for EDC Activities for 2022-23

Kelley's Corner construction related

Implementation of bylaws (Bag charge and Plastics ban)

Great Road Complete Streets plan

South Acton Village Vision and Planning and MBTA community requirements

Powder Mill Corridor Revitalization Plan

Review bylaws

Review Julie's "How to do Business" guide

Support/advocate for sewers on Great Road

Future Opportunities:

Catherine commented that the long term and short-term goals of the Select Board do not include anything about economic development or supporting businesses. Their focus is on sustainability, equity, diversity, and supporting renters. Most goals are costing money, but there is not much discussion on the other side of equation in terms of raising money to support goals. The existing model is not sustainable.

How can the EDC represent the business owners' interests and present in front of select board?

Julie suggested to have a specific request to present.

EDC needs a solid plan before going in front of the board.

Dave C. in the past proposed that the EDC could create a recognition program to acknowledge the value that businesses bring to the town.

Immediate opportunity – the Select Board will include a listening session during their September 12, 2022 meeting regarding potential uses for remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Ideas to suggest to support businesses are:

- Activities that move toward adding sewers on Great Road
- Marketing and/web-design activities that support businesses like what Maynard has done (nice website that is accessed through a QR code, included in Action Unlimited). Dave D. demonstrated the Maynard site to the group in the room.
- Electric vehicle charging stations placed in shopping/dining areas, particularly along Great Road that would encourage customers to stay and shop and dine.

EDC members should attend the listening session and suggest these types of items and/or send an e-mail to the Select Board by September 23, 2022 per John Mangiaratti. The Select Board will be voting on an updated investment plan on October 3, 2022.

Updates from Economic Development Director

- Kelly Corner Block Party – Planned for Sep 10. Needs volunteer. The mural will be unveiled at the party.
- Online Permitting Software – Currently the committee is hearing from vendors to identify those that can meet the requirements for the system.
- Great Road Complete Streets project –
There will be another session to provide input to the plan for how to make Great Road more accessible to walkers and bike riders.
- The Acton Business Incubator project – Julie is looking for members to do outreach and serve as advisors to provide feedback to people who have business ideas.

Member Updates:

Mike suggested that the town should recognize the upcoming 100th anniversary of Haartz, a major employer and valuable corporate citizen.

Nagog Mall was sold to a new owner. Julie plans to reach out to the new owner to see if she can learn of future plans for the space which currently includes several restaurants (Crossroads Café, Mayuri Indian Cuisine, etc.)

Dave D. mentioned earlier that the new café (KJ's Caffe) near Trader Joe's has had to delay opening because they have not been able to obtain a critical part related to their ovens. Julie will talk to the building inspector to see if there is anyway to help this business owner so he can open.

Larry's Wake will be Sep 18, 2022 from 3pm to 6pm at Acton Funeral Home.

Adjourn – 8:52 p.m

Reference materials for this meeting can be found at <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-15319>

Action Items Identified in this Meeting:

- Catherine will provide a summary follow-up document on proposed activities for the EDC this coming year.
- Catherine will send revised EDC description to Fran and Fran will find out if it needs to be approved by the Select Board before posting it to the website.
- Julie will talk to the building inspector about KJ Caffe's issue.

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