

EDC Minutes – 21 August 2014

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These are the meeting minutes from the Economic Development Committee (EDC) of the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. This meeting took place on 21 August 2014 in Room 204 of the Acton Town Hall.

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm by Nancy Dinkel.

There was no public participation.

Present: Ann Chang, Derrick Chin, Dick Calandrella, Doug Tindal, Franny Osman, Ken Zhou, Larry Kenah, Nancy Dinkel

Not Present: Allan Gulliver, Chris Pappas

Meeting Minutes (2)

Minutes from 7 August 2014 EDC meeting were approved with two edits.

Board of Selectmen Report (3)

Franny Osman presented a brief update from the Board of Selectmen.

- It is likely that there will be a Town Meeting in the fall to discuss, at least, the nursing service.
- The latest activities associated with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail focus on certain easements as the trail winds its way through Acton.

Acton 2020 Update (4)

There was no report from the Kelley's Corner Steering Committee. Larry Kenah missed the KCSC meeting that took place on 13 August 2014.

Mission and Goals (5)

Most of the meeting was spent discussing goals for the EDC and activities in support of these goals. We agreed that it is the activities (or projects) that will produce concrete results. The goals serve as organizing principles for the activities.

Most of the discussion that took place during the meeting is contained in a working paper that will be presented later in the calendar year to the Board of Selectmen and the rest of the town.

Focus for the EDC

As part of our effort to reexamine the role of the EDC, we asked ourselves whether the EDC should focus solely on serving existing businesses or, alternatively, on efforts to attract new (and relocating) businesses to town.

After a brief discussion, we agreed that we needed to focus on both audiences. This is reflected in the later discussion of goals and projects.

Mission Statement

At the previous meeting, we created a draft mission statement for the EDC. Members seemed generally satisfied with the statement as written. We voted unanimously to accept the following mission statement for the Economic Development Committee.

EDC Mission Statement

A thriving business community is essential to the future of Acton.

To that end, the Economic Development Committee will:

- Help attract, retain, and grow businesses and jobs in Acton and improve the economic environment
- Help increase the value and desirability of our community by supporting the needs of the current commercial and industrial businesses
- Promote the appropriate development, redevelopment, and renewal of commercial property

Goals and Activities

We spent some time discussing goals that were different from the three bullet points in the mission statement. At one point, we settled on a single goal that read as follows.

Make Acton a more business friendly town

- Attract new business
- Support existing businesses

The test for either list of goals was to determine whether activities that were already on our radar screen or activities suggested by members could be attached to one or more goals. (If valid activities could not be connected, this would indicate that our list of goals was incomplete.)

Items of Note

There were several comments that surfaced during the meeting that should be captured in these minutes as well as the working EDC document.

- Doug Tindal made the following cautionary comment.
 - We should create goals and projects that we can accomplish with help from the BoS and town staff but not create goals that require interactions among multiple boards and committees
- In the past, we talked about the advocacy role played by the EDC for both existing and new businesses. In this meeting, we found a different category where the EDC can play a supporting role. The area is infrastructure. Two primary examples are sewers in West Acton and various transportation activities that make it easier for employees to reach their place of work either from their homes or from transportation hubs such as the South Acton Train Station.
- We talked about how far the EDC should go to attract businesses to Acton. Should the EDC solicit specific businesses or business types to move to Acton? After some discussion, we mostly agreed that we should allow the market to dictate what businesses will move to Acton. Our role

is to make this transition as simple as possible. Ken Zhou summarized our position with the following metaphor.

- “Our role is not to pick the chess pieces but to improve the board.”
- We have talked at length about the need for a database that lists all businesses in Acton. During this meeting, we concluded that this very important activity does not really fit into the goals listed earlier or any of the three bullet points in the mission statement.

Activities and Goals

The remainder of the meeting was spent going through lists of activities and attaching them to goals. Lists of activities were written by Franny Osman, Larry Kenah, and Bharat Shah. An additional list from David Foley was distributed during the meeting but not discussed. Additional activities were mentioned during the meeting by Ann Chang and others. These are also included in the working document.

Remaining Agenda Items (6..9)

There were no updates on agenda items 6 through 9. Work on these projects will be clarified after we go through the detailed discussion of EDC mission, goals, and projects.

Upcoming Meetings (10)

The next meeting will be the regularly scheduled meeting on 4 September 2014.

Mathias Rosenfeld will attend the 18 September 2014 EDC meeting to describe the 525 Mass Ave project in West Acton.

In Closing

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm.

These minutes were recorded by Lawrence J Kenah, EDC Clerk