

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 1/18/18, held in Room 9 of Acton Town Hall.

Called to Order: 7:30 pm

Present: Mike Majors, Derrick Chin, Josh Fischel, Ann Chang, Larry Kenah, Chingsung Chang, Shirley Ming, Dave Didriksen, Peter Daniel

Absent: David Foley, Selby

I. Public Participation:

“Our usual collection of the public has assembled,” says Larry Kenah.

II. Membership Update:

Still working on seeking clarity from people above our pay grade

III. Proposed Plans for Kelley’s Corner:

We have at the longest until 2021 to wait for K Mart’s lease to be up. Stop & Shop owns the property, and they have a preferred developer named Adam Winstanley, whose family has done lots of work in Concord. All proposals involve residential and would require zoning changes. We are talking about bringing zoning changes to Town Meeting in 2018. Dave Didriksen asks what the rush is to bring zoning changes to 2018’s Town Meeting; when the developer has a proposal to present, why not bring the zoning changes along with them?

There is a sense in the room that we’d like to see more commercial and less residential than the proposals we see show. Chingsung Chang brings up the fact that there is a citizens action group pushing for K Mart to remain in that lot. Dave is vociferous in his opposition to residential there; it’s the last developable commercial properties left in Kelley’s Corner. “I understand from the developer’s point of view why it makes sense, but why should the town roll over and say, ‘Sure, do whatever you want?’”

Chingsung asks whether retail should be tied to the proximity to high school students. Dave says high school students may *have* a lot of money, but they don’t spend a lot of money. He wants more voices involved so that the developer can present A, B, and C options. As an EDC, we want to maintain our commercial businesses in the commercial spaces we already have.

There will be a board of selectmen meeting on February 5th where Winstanley’s colleagues will be next. We should go.

Mike Majors asks Peter Daniel about what would complement Rapscaillon’s. Peter says it’s a tricky situation because we don’t have the downtown that Ayer, Maynard, Concord, or West Concord has. That said, Acton does a pretty good job of having this mixture. The more you get here, the better. If this is the last commercial space, they should think really hard about how to use it.

Larry said residential would be for empty nesters and young professionals as a target. What gets Dave’s goat is that we’re thinking of stacking the deck in favor of residential; we currently have the leverage because it’s currently zoned commercial. Residential is residential forever; commercial is more self-correcting.

Your humble clerk proposed a public market, à la Santa Barbara’s Public Market, or DC’s Union Market, and Dave didn’t immediately shoot it down as preposterous, so I felt like I now have a small amount of business sense.

Shirley Ming asks about 40Bs and how it works in terms of when it happens in the timeline of planning. The town, it seems, does lose control if the developer goes down that road.

In summary: We'd like to see more commercial, three dramatically different proposals, and we'd like to see what the development would look like *without* proposed zoning changes. The problem is that, if we don't change the zoning, it could be overwritten with a 40B housing proposal. Dave says this is a nice start and a nice try, but there need to be more visions.

Fun Facts: Mike's current go-to place for corned beef right now is Meat Again in Westford.

IV. Goals for 2018:

a) Business Census

Larry describes the state of the census. He's aiming to visit every single business that has more than one employee. He'll visit office parks next, and hopes to be done this year.

b) Tax Incentive Policy

After our experiences with Insulet, we realized we needed to have some guidance in place to help us work with the next Insulet. Selby has specific ideas about this. He wants a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure that expectations are shaped from the perspectives of the town and the company. No surprises next time.

c) South Acton Focus

What can we do to help? Mike suggests Babson students could come evaluate ways to help figure out our options.

d) Rail Trail

Any potential economic development opportunities along Bruce Freeman and Assabet River Trails—any zoning changes that need to be made or anything?

V. Updates from Members:

Chingsung gives us the board update: they're continuing to look at the K Mart property, in the midst of talking about water, pot, and dog parks. Kelley's Corner and Walker continue to percolate and move forward. The board lacks an overarching, unifying vision for that part of town. How does what we're doing on any one site impact moving forward on the rest of the sites? Walker and K Mart aren't isolated. Mike Majors suggests—and Chingsung agrees, emphatically—that we should have an updated master plan: a design document. Dave says that the town should not play developer. He prefers very general guidelines. If you have certain goals (walkable, bike paths, common meeting spaces), identify those instead of micro-managing developers. Chingsung says the map he envisions has flexibility; it's a choose-your-own-adventure style thing, but he wants all the choices to lead to this particular vision. Dave says, "Let's hold onto our leverage as long as we can."

Update from Peter: There are a lot of businesses that have closed off the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce's rolls; dues and fees are down. The Chamber has a new executive director, though, so they're optimistic about the future, but not necessarily based on data. They do some hard data stuff, so Peter has access.

VI. Adjourn @ 9:15

Go Pats!

Next meeting: 2/1/18