

Economic Development Committee

Town Hall · 40 Center Street · Fairhaven, MA 02719

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES DECEMBER 15, 2022

PLACE OF MEETING: Town Hall for Members and remotely via Zoom for the Public
DATE AND TIME: Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 6:30 PM
MEETING TYPE: Economic Development Committee

Quorum and Attendance:

Present: Cathy Melanson (Chair); Leon Correy, Jessica Fidalgo, Patrick Carr, and Kevin McLaughlin.

Paul Foley, Planning Director, was also present.

Ms. Melanson called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM and read the open meeting law for the record. On reviewing the attendance, there was a quorum present.

Ms. Melanson introduced the two new members of this committee – Patrick Carr and Jacob Galary. Note, Mr. Galary was not present for this meeting.

Review and Approve Minutes of the June 23 and September 15, 2022 meeting

The motion to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2022 meeting was made by Ms. Fidalgo and seconded by Mr. McLaughlin. Mr. Carr abstained from voting, and motion passed unanimously via roll call vote from the other committee members.

The motion to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2022 meeting was made by Ms. Fidalgo and seconded by Mr. McLaughlin. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Correspondence:

There was no correspondence for this meeting.

EDC Mission Statement:

Following the decision made at a previous Select Board meeting, Select Board representatives can no longer serve as voting members on committees. Ms. Melanson put forth a letter requesting to change the EDC Mission statement add an additional voting member to the committee in order to have the proper number of voting members.

Ms. Fidalgo made the motion to send Ms. Melanson's request letter to update the EDC Mission Statement and Charge to the Select Board and Town Administrator and was seconded by Mr. McLaughlin. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Local Business Spotlight:

Mr. Foley presented a refined version of his coverage of the changes in Fairhaven since SPREDD created a vacant property database back in 2018. The data included both red markers to indicate general vacant properties and red markers with black centers for storefronts. Mr. Foley's updated map now added blue markers to indicate new businesses.

His rundown of businesses included the Plan-It Eats and Pet Supply Store in the CVS Plaza, the new car wash, the revived Midas, and the O'Reilly Auto Parts and Family Dollar that now occupy the previous Benny's plaza. The old car wash in that area will be replaced by a Mirasol Cafe which will become the model for franchising for Mirasol.

Discussions then turned towards the developments at the Fairhaven plaza, noting the Subway that had moved in and the building of the new Chiptole. While there have been discussions on adding a Planet Fitness or reworking the old bank building with the various property owners in the plaza, Mr. Foley is hoping for the 4OR to create new options for redevelopment in that area. Also in that area is the new Southcoast Pickleball that took over the old Carousel building and the Jersey Mike's and Spider King Nail Salon in the Stop & Shop plaza. He also noted that the small business condos off Route 6 have filled in, the relocation of Alden Mazda, and the Little People's College on Bridge Street.

He then covered the planned improvements to Bridge Street between Route 6 and Alden Road being funded by a \$1 million Joint Transportation Bond Bill. With hopes for further funding from MassWorks, there are plans to improve the drainage, add sidewalks and bus stops along with other improvements.

Mr. Foley then showed several slides of the new developments covered above to discuss in detail but also including other businesses such as the Acushnet Company's headquarters renovation and the new Fairhaven Pharmacy which was previously featured in the EDC local business spotlight. He is updating the EDC's section of the town website to include businesses featured at these meetings. The page can be found at: <https://www.fairhaven-ma.gov/economic-development-committee/webforms/business-spotlight>

Suggestions for other possible Small Business Spotlight candidates included 508 Sneakers, Sip n' Sit Cafe, and the Rescue Café's new permanent location set to open in the old Bijou building.

4OR Working Group Update:

Mr. Foley proceeded to update the committee on the progress being made by the 4OR Working Group, after the 4th meeting the previous night and the first attended by the legal consultant Adam Costa of Mead, Talerman, & Costa. Right now, the two major focuses are on narrowing down the location of the first 4OR district and how best to temper the terms to allow for a wider area of development but with a cap on the number of housing units.

He also explained the differences between 4OB and 4OR, with a focus on the benefits and protections offered by 4OR for both the developers and the Town. One major benefit will be an increase in the Town's affordable housing as 20% of all new units must be affordable to residents making 80% of the

Area Median Income (AMI). Additionally, any development that has rental units with the requisite 20% affordable housing units will have all units count towards the Town's overall percentage of affordable housing. He also covered the state funding available under 40R, specifically citing Chapter 40S which reimburses municipalities for the additional cost of educating school-age children living in smart growth districts.

Ms. Melanson specifically cited the Fairhaven Center for Business located on Alden Rd. as an example of a plaza to emulate. Mr. Foley also outlined his plans for a bus route that connects Fairhaven to the upcoming New Bedford train station. He also talked about the use of transfer of development rights (TDR) to build multi-story units in and around Route 6 rather than taking over land in less developed areas that could instead be preserved for both environmental protection and to maintain the character of the Town.

Mr. Foley then switched to displaying maps of possible areas for 40R development along Alden Rd in the following locations:

- A) Plaza Way (Current location of Staples)
- B) Berdon Way (Current location of the Ocean State Job Lot)
- C) 37 Alden Road (In between the Fairhaven Center for Business and the Hampton Inn)
- D) The open lot at the intersection of Alden Road and Bridge Street beside the Brahmin Factory
- E) Within Fairhaven Commons (Current location of Walmart)

But there are a few issues with these locations such as reducing the amount of available parking at Fairhaven Commons and needing to contact the property owners on the possible development plans, and the regional transmission wires making development difficult at Plaza Way. Focusing on areas C, D, and E, Mr. Foley showed how the number of units would be calculated for those given areas. As an example, Fairhaven Commons would have a developable area of 7.4 acres which would allow for 89 to 148 units.

Next, he outlined the results of the visual preference surveys from the 40R working groups. Residents voted largely in favor of 2 to 4-story mixed-use buildings in the Plaza areas. In discussing the example photographs, both the developments in and around Union Street in New Bedford and Mashpee Commons of Mashpee, MA were noted as good inspirations for the types of development to build in Fairhaven. The results of the Route 6 and Waterfront visual surveys were also shown, indicating preferences for 1 to 2.5-story mixed-use buildings.

Mr. Foley noted that he and Harbormaster Tim Cox received two Seaport Economic Council grants – One in conjunction with the New Bedford Port Authority to update the Port of New Bedford and Fairhaven Municipal Harbor Plan for \$320,000 and one to cover Phase 5B of the Union Wharf Bulkhead Improvements for \$1 Million. Discussion followed about areas to develop along the waterfront but there

would be issues with stormwater drainage, high tide levels, and sea level rise that would all need to be considered.

At Ms. Melanson's prompting, Mr. Foley then outlined the current 40R Schedule with the next meeting planned for Wednesday, January 18, 2023, from 4:30 to 6:30 PM. The hope is to complete the draft bylaw and guidelines and public hearings by February and send to DHCD for review to have their approval ahead of the Town Meeting on May 6. He also covered the grants received to help fund this redevelopment – Community Compact Best Practices Grant; 1-Stop for Growth Grant; EEA Community Planning Grant; and the EDC for funds in FY21 and FY23, with funds for FY24 to be requested at the next meeting.

Ms. Melanson asked for updates on a few projects, starting with wishing to know if the work on Union Wharf was completed which Mr. Foley noted that Phase 5B should be the last one. She then asked about the former drive-in location, Mr. Foley went over the results of the environmental assessments from the previous year, noting that even though it is close to the landfill, it is not seriously contaminated. However, a wetlands survey is still outstanding but that is dependent on clearing out the drainage ditches and rectifying issues brought forth by the DEP. Close by at 194 Bridge Street, reclaiming that land will cost a few million dollars to excavate any trash in the soil and cap the land. Mr. Foley then outlined various plans for improvement focused on the proposed 40R districts.

Stephanie Fidalgo forwarded a question from "Lee/Doug" watching via the Zoom Meeting on if there had been a proposal for a new Domino's Pizza along Alden Road. Mr. Foley answered that a proposal had been received for a Domino's near the Sweet Ginger restaurant. While they had provided kitchen plans, full site plans would be needed for the Special Permit review. He also answered an additional question from the chat that any affordable units built under 40R would need to stay at affordable prices for at least 30 years. Mr. Foley also suggested any interested parties attend the January 18, 2023, 40R Working Group meeting.

Other Business:

Mr. Foley and Mr. Correy attended the SRTA regarding consolidating bus stops and requested further information on the proposed reduction of 25% of the bus stops and how it would affect Fairhaven's existing bus stops.

Next Meeting:

There was no discussion regarding the next meeting, but it is tentatively planned for January 19, 2023. The motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Fidalgo and seconded by Mr. Carr.

The meeting was called to a close by Ms. Melanson at 7:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephanie A. Fidalgo
Recording Secretary,
Economic Development Committee