

Economic Development Committee

Town Hall · 40 Center Street · Fairhaven, MA 02719



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

PLACE OF MEETING: Town Hall for Members & remotely via Zoom for the Public

DATE AND TIME: Thursday, July 20, 2023, at 6:30 PM

MEETING TYPE: Economic Development Committee

Quorum and Attendance:

Present: Cathy Melanson, Chair; Karyn Ferreira, Stasia Powers, John Hinds.

Not present for this meeting: Suzanne Dwyer, Patrick Carr

Ms. Melanson called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM and read the open meeting law and explained the closed captioning functionality for the record. She noted that there was not a quorum present at this meeting and explained to the committee that Jessica Fidalgo had resigned at the July 18, 2023, Planning Board meeting. Ms. Powers agreed with Ms. Melanson on the possibility of having Mr. Carr take over as the Planning Board representative to the EDC and then having the Select Board appoint a new member.

Welcome to New Members:

As he was not present at the previous meeting, Mr. Hinds was invited to introduce himself to the committee members. His wife grew up in Fairhaven and the couple has owned a cottage on West Island since 2010, with them becoming permanent residents in 2021. He outlined his corporate background, having started with Procter & Gamble in sales in the 1970s, then going to work for Pepsi in merchandising, marketing, and bottling. He cited working as Director of Sales for Danyon Yogurt as one of his favorite jobs, and then finished with working in Key Account Management at Tyson Foods. He found that his strongest skills were fact-finding, setting up new processes, and working with teams to find solutions that work well for everyone.

Review and Approve minutes of the June 22, 2023, meeting:

As there was not a quorum present, the approval of the June 22, 2023, minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

Correspondence:

As mentioned at the June 22, 2023, meeting, Mr. Hinds had sent a letter to Ms. Melanson about the observations he had made about businesses along Route 6. He made notes about each business such as the addresses and his opinion of the building aesthetics, having especially appreciated businesses that were well-landscaped.

When there was a momentary question about whether committee members should have business cards made, Ms. Powers requested a step back as the committee did not have the authority to tell business owners how to use their property. Ms. Melanson and Mr. Hinds assured that this point of the process was only for fact-finding and Mr. Hinds did not speak with any business owners other than the one who approached him as he was taking notes.

Ms. Powers inquired as to the purpose of the fact-finding, with Mr. Hinds explaining that he wished to gather addresses and find the owners. When Ms. Powers stated that the information should be available in Town Hall, Ms. Melanson brought up her concerns with the business registration records being incomplete and cited her own experience with gathering records on Short Term Rentals. Ms. Powers reminded the members that they should wait until the committee had voted on a plan before engaging with businesses.

Going back to the purpose of his fact-finding, Mr. Hinds wished to walk around to find ideas for improving the area. He visited Hingham in Plymouth County, as the town was known for its aesthetic charm, to seek further ideas and took several photos of storefronts as examples. He praised the Planning Board for setting landscaping requirements for new businesses but wanted a plan for other businesses along Route 6. He suggested offering to remove asphalt around older businesses or working with a nursery to offer discounts, though only after an EDC-approved plan had also been approved by the Select Board. Overall, he felt that such a plan would help to improve relationships between the town and business owners along with improving the look of the area.

Ms. Melanson outlined the work the Planning Board had done to require new businesses to meet certain landscaping requirements and hoped that those aesthetic improvements would lead more established businesses to also want to update. Joining in on the conversation, Ms. Ferreira pointed out that she rented her property but also had a commitment to making her business look appealing. She wanted to make sure that fellow renters would also be included in this discussion but also cautioned the committee that offering such improvements could be a “touchy” subject with certain individuals.

Ms. Powers suggested re-thinking the concept into a more generalized “Beautify Fairhaven” campaign. Both Ms. Ferreira and Mr. Hinds agreed on the importance of aesthetics and Mr. Hinds hoped to at least reach the point of making business owners consider the proposal and Ms. Melanson agreed that if done correctly, it was a doable project to help revitalize the area. Ms. Powers still had some hesitations and wanted to wait until a new Planner was hired to see if there was a way to find grants to help with funding such a project. Mr. Hinds suggested finding a way to offer bulk discounts on plants and excavation services. At that point, Ms. Melanson requested to table the discussion until the next meeting when more members would be present.

Use of EDC FY23 Funds:

Ms. Melanson requested to put the discussion on EDC funds on hold until she had further information to present to the committee. She had spoken with Ms. Masten in the Planning Department about the funds and would work with her on further research.

Planning for FY24:

Ms. Melanson would like to focus on Route 6 improvements in the year ahead along with further building business outreach. Ms. Melanson and Mr. Hinds would like to contact the business owners first and then the building owners if possible.

Ms. Powers requested to wait for more of the committee and a new planner present before acting on any plans. Ms. Melanson agreed with that point, saying that she would help a new planner get caught up on the committee's possible plans. Mr. Hinds suggested voting on the plans in phases. Ms. Powers reminded the members not to speak as a representative of the committee until a plan had been formalized, and Mr. Hinds promised that he would not do so.

Ms. Melanson hoped for a focus on business outreach and improvements in the commercial areas would be an overall improvement to the Town.

Any other business reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the posting of this meeting:

Ms. Fidalgo asked if Ms. Powers had an update from the recent Select Board strategic meeting. She could not offer any specific details as they had yet to be voted on, but she did promise that Economic Development had been a major focus and that the Select Board would have specific tactics to share once they were finalized. She expected to have more information by the end of August.

Mr. Hinds also shared his initial letter to Ms. Melanson with the committee and Ms. Melanson suggested waiting on more in-depth discussion until the next meeting, putting it under correspondence.

Overall, she hopes that further economic development would help the Town grow, especially given that it has been at roughly the same population level for the last 50 years.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is tentatively planned for August 24, 2023.

The motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Melanson and seconded by Mr. Powers.

The meeting was called to a close by Ms. Melanson at 7:15 PM.

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

