

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, January 19, 2023, at 6:30 PM

MEETING TYPE: Economic Development Committee

Quorum and Attendance:

Present: Cathy Melanson, Chair; Jessica Fidalgo, Kevin McLaughlin, Leon Correy (Select Board Rep.), Patrick Carr (6:45).

Paul Foley, Planning Director, was also present.

Not present for this meeting: Eddie Lopez, and Jacob Galary.

Ms. Melanson called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM and read the open meeting law for the record. There was not a quorum present when taking attendance at the meeting's start so the items on the agenda requiring a vote were tabled until after Ms. Fidalgo arrived.

Correspondence:

There was no correspondence for this meeting.

Local business update:

As a follow-up to the discussions of the December meeting, Mr. Foley covered the three new businesses in the American Legion Building on Main Street:

- Sip N' Sit Café at 54 Main St – A casual café offering Italian coffee – both self-serve and made by baristas – and fresh pastries.
- Vintage Soul at 52 Main St – A small home décor shop currently open on Thursdays and Saturdays.
- Whole Child Therapy Center at 50 Main St – Offering a range of child therapy services.

The old Bijou building has cleaned up the three storefronts to make them available for rent. There had been previous issues between the owner and the Building Inspector, but after the owner appealed to the state the Planning Board approved a special permit for the housing units above the storefronts. Any additional work on the currently closed theater in the building will also require a special permit.

The Fairhaven Center for Business AKA Alden Plaza is now full, with the Fairhaven Smoke Shop moving into the plaza. The Smoke Shop now features a humidior on site. Domino's is looking to move into their

previous location by Sweet Ginger on Route 6. Also, along Route 6, Marisol's café had their special permit approved and will begin construction soon and Farland Corp is moving into the old location of What a Find Furniture and has been updating the building and the parking lots.

Further new businesses include the Chipotle being built by McDonald's and the new Car Wash on Route 6. Mr. Correy hoped that the new Car Wash would provide some competition and motivation to renovate the Nice N' Clean Car Wash located further down Route 6 in East Fairhaven. In a check-in with previous Local Business spotlight presenter, Southcoast Pickleball, they are considering adding another court. Mr. Correy brought up that he had been trying to visit the recently opened 508 Sneakers on Main Street, but they did not have their hours listed. Ms. Fidalgo informed him that the owner had cut back on hours recently due to a medical issue. Finally, Mr. Foley noted the renovations to the Acushnet Company World Headquarters.

Ms. Melanson requested that Mr. Foley invite more of the new business owners to visit the board. The board then noted that previous Local Business Spotlight presenter, Brian Meneses of Fairhaven Pharmacy, had been doing well and continued to work with the Town – for example, offering flu shots to Town employees.

As Ms. Fidalgo was now present, Ms. Melanson brought forth the previously tabled agenda items.

Review and Approve the Minutes of the December 15, 2022 meeting:

The motion to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2022 meeting was made by Ms. Fidalgo and seconded by Mr. McLaughlin. The motion passed unanimously.

EDC 2022 Annual Report:

Mr. Foley covered the highlights of the EDC 2022 Annual Report for the board. He first focused on the work done to create a 40R district in Fairhaven, such as hiring Dodson & Flinker Landscape Architects and Planners and Adam Costa of Mead, Talerman, and Costa Attorneys as consultants, establishing the 40R Working Group, and running multiple 40R meetings including the public visioning workshop in November.

In terms of funding and grants, the EDC committed \$6,000 in FY22 funds as a local match to the 1-Stop for Growth Grant and EEA for consultants and design guidelines. The EDC has also committed funds for the Route 6/240 Plan. As a whole, the Department of Planning and Economic Development was instrumental in bringing in \$3,106,236 in grants for various Town projects.

The committee did have some change over this year with Bernie Roderick, Bob Espindola, and Travis Rapoza leaving the committee. In turn, the committee welcomed new members Leon Correy, Patrick Carr, and Jake Galary.

Mr. McLaughlin brought up the changes to the committee appointments that needed to be updated for the report. Currently, Ms. Melanson is appointed to the Rogers Re-Use Committee and the committee does not have a member appointed to the Lagoa Friendship Pact Committee.

Mr. McLaughlin made a motion to accept the annual report with the requested changes and was seconded by Ms. Fidalgo. The motion passed unanimously.

40R Working Group Update:

Mr. Foley had a Zoom meeting with the consultants and several plaza owners on Friday, January 13, 2023, to better involve the owners in the process. In attendance were Michael Cavounis and Gus Zachariadis of MCZ Realty, owners of Staples side of Plaza Way, Peter Cunningham, owner of the old Citizen's Bank building, and Gator Realty, owners of the Big Lots side of Plaza Way.

While not present at the meeting, Mr. Foley has also been in touch with the Kroenke Sports & Entertainment Holding Group which owns the majority of Fairhaven Commons. He is also working to get into contact with Ocean State Job Lot which owns the plaza on Berdon Way. Bask is the new owner of the former Mazda dealership on Alden Road and has plans to turn the building into a fulfillment center.

Mr. Foley also spoke to the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) about his concerns with parts of the 40R legislation. For context, he first went over the difference between 40R and 40B and how 40R allows the Town more control over the process from the location to the design. The issue is that larger 40R districts must allow for a high number of housing units. If the original Route 6/240 Target Area was included in the 40R that could potentially add thousands of housing units. As such, the Working Group is narrowing down the proposed 40R district to limit the number of potential housing units. Mr. Foley would like to see the state's legislation adjusted so that a municipality could put a cap on the number of units within a given area. For the time being, he plans to work with the plaza owners who have shown interest in collaborating with the town on a 40R district and use those as test zones before expanding the district out further.

In a conversation with Mr. McLaughlin, Mr. Foley outlined that once the 40R bylaws and design guidelines have been approved by Town Meeting for a smaller, starter test zone, further areas could then be added with additional Town Meeting votes. Ms. Melanson and Ms. Fidalgo also chimed in to explain that the main reason for starting with smaller areas was due to how the prospect of adding thousands of housing units was negatively received at the Working Group meetings. If there was the possibility of having a cap on the number of units, Mr. Foley would want to add several 40R districts both along Route 6/240 and the waterfront with different design standards in terms of height.

Mr. Carr attended the previous 40R Working Group meeting and shared his observations. Mainly, because Fairhaven currently does not meet the state's minimum threshold for affordable housing, a 40B project could be proposed that would offer the Town little control over the design or location. Additionally, citizens shouldn't worry about a rapid transformation of the town as it can take years to find a developer to invest in building along the 40R guidelines. He saw a major benefit of the 40R was to protect areas from potentially unwanted 40B projects. Mr. Foley added that while the Zoning Board could turn down a 40B project, the developer could appeal to the state and would likely get approved.

The committee also brought up monetary incentives for the 40R – for example, 200 units would have a one-time payment of \$200,000 plus \$3,000 for each unit built for a total of \$800,000. While the

incentive is a major factor to consider, other aspects of the 40R such as the density requirements encourage the Town to start with the smaller test zones.

Turning back to earlier in the conversation, Mr. Foley went over the different visual surveys conducted by the 40R Working Group which favored buildings anywhere from a single story to 4 stories in height for the plaza area. He favors the higher end of the spectrum as those would provide beautiful views of the town. For Route 6 and the Waterfront, 2-story mixed-use was the favored height and style.

MCZ Realty was in favor of the 40R and liked the concept of taller buildings. They would also be willing to work with the current tenants of their plaza to find them new locations, with Mr. Foley specifically citing Staples as an example. Mr. Cunningham is also in favor of the 40R as the former bank building has proved difficult to update. Gator Realty's legal consultant didn't quite understand but wished to remain in touch.

In regards to reworking the parking in the area for the 40R, Mr. Foley brought up the concept of building a parking garage underneath the new development. I (Stephanie Fidalgo) referenced the Atlantic Station neighborhood in Atlanta, GA as an example of a successful mixed-use district that utilizes an underground parking garage under a collection of podium buildings.

Ms. Melanson suggested that all of the board members attend the final 40R Working Group meeting on Wednesday, January 25th to assist in creating a plan that can pass at Town Meeting. While Mr. Foley would like to have the 40R approval on the warrant for the May 6th Town Meeting, it may have to be delayed to a special Town Meeting in the fall to have more time to develop.

Mr. McLaughlin asked if changing the zoning in the area would work better, but Mr. Foley pointed out that while there were municipalities that created "40R Like" districts that way, re-zoning an area would require a 2/3rds majority vote at Town Meeting as compared to a 40R which would require a simple majority. When the discussion turned again to using a 40R district to protect the town from a 40B project, Mr. Foley would like to see a recount of the town's affordable housing numbers. The board also suggested including the former site of the former Park Motors as a 40R test zone candidate.

Vote to assign \$6,000 in EDC FY23 Funds to 40R Consultants:

Mr. Foley needed the board's approval to use the committee's funds to pay the consultants. Before a motion could be made, Mr. McLaughlin suggested using broader language so as not to tie all the funds to a specific project.

As such, Mr. Foley requested to hold off on voting on the funding until the next meeting so he could rewrite the request.

Grants Update:

As referenced in the 2022 Annual Report, the Planning & Economic Development department has secured over \$6 Million in grants for the Town. On the next page is a condensed overview of the grants:

2020 Grants

SEC Grant - Union Wharf South Wall	\$1,000,000
Community Compact Best Practices Grant — Land Use Regulation	\$30,000
Community Compact Best Practices Grant - Adopt Complete Streets	\$38,000
Transportation Bond Bill (TBB) for Bridge Street from Route 6 to 240	\$1,000,000
SEC Maritime Economic Development Grant	\$50,000
MHC Inventory Grant	\$30,000

2021 Grants

Site Readiness MassDevelopment Enviro. Assessments	\$75,000
Shared Streets 2 Projects on Prioritization Plan	\$183,689
Complete Streets 4 Projects on Prioritization Plan	\$332,636
FY 22 DHCD 1-Stop for Growth	\$75,000
FY22-23 EEA Community Planning Assistance Grant	\$45,000

2022 Grants

SEC Grant - Phase 5A of Union Wharf North Wall	\$1,000,000
SEC Grant - Phase 5B of Union Wharf North Wall	\$1,000,000
SEC Grant - Update the Municipal Harbor Plan	\$320,000
DHCD 1-Stop for Growth Grant	\$75,000
Community Development and Block Grant (CDBG)	\$686,236
MVP Critical Infrastructure Assessment	\$75,000
Buzzards Bay National Estuary Mini-Grant w/ BBC	\$25,000

2023 Grants

Hazard Mitigation Plan	\$35,000
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Several additional notes:

- The MHC Inventory Grant was eventually returned as the Town could not find a qualified historian for the project.
- The Municipal Harbor Plan will be done in coordination with New Bedford.
- The MVP Critical Infrastructure Assessment was originally under Sustainability and has since been taken over by the Planning & Economic Development Department.

Other Business:

Ms. Melanson promoted Mr. Correy for a follow-up on the request from the December 2022 meeting to update the EDC Mission Statement to increase the number of voting members after representatives from the Select Board were made non-voting members. Mr. Correy explained that since the change would affect multiple committees, Town Administrator Ms. Angie Lopes Ellison would be working out a blanket solution rather than addressing the situation on a piecemeal basis. Once completed, the board will add a voting member to make 7 voting members.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is tentatively planned for February 16, 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 7:15 PM.

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