

Economic Development Committee

Town Hall · 40 Center Street · Fairhaven, MA 02719



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

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

DATE AND TIME: Thursday, March 16, 2023, at 6:30 PM

MEETING TYPE: Economic Development Committee

Quorum and Attendance:

Present: Cathy Melanson, Chair; Kevin McLaughlin, and Patrick Carr.

Present via Zoom: Eddie Lopez

Paul Foley, Planning Director, was also present.

Not present for this meeting: Leon Correy, Jessica Fidalgo, 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 Mr. Carr arrived.

Correspondence:

There was no correspondence for this meeting.

Local business update:

At the start of the update, Mr. Foley went over the original Economic Development Plan established in 2017 to highlight how the 40R will meet multiple points.

He then divided the local business update into two categories – New Businesses with New Buildings and New Businesses in Existing Buildings.

New Businesses with New Buildings

As anticipated, the new Chipotle Restaurant at Plaza Way will be opening as soon as they work out the last details. The Two Ventures Car Wash plans to open in June, though their progress has been slow. They should be connected to permanent power soon and Mr. Foley has been working with them on getting some easement issues approved by the Town. Marisol's Café had a slight holdup with MassDOT but as soon as they get their Access Permit, they will file for a demolition and building permit.

New Businesses in Existing Buildings

The Rescue Café has moved into 414 Main Street and offers coffee, baked goods, and Hawaiian shaved ice. They brand themselves as “Coffee with a Purpose” as a portion of each sale goes to the Acushnet Animal Shelter. They are currently open Wednesday to Saturday, 6 AM – 3 PM and Sundays 7 AM – 2 PM. Mr. Foley did voice his concerns about their current parking situation as they only have on-street parking currently.

Bloom Bus Charters has moved into the current DATTCO site, moving their maintenance garage and dispatch staff for their bus charter business with 22 busses to Fairhaven from Taunton. DATTCO has been working on how to keep their bus line running until the commuter rail is extended down into New Bedford.

Chic Boutique is also a business moving into Fairhaven at 150 Huttleston Ave, previously operating out of Dartmouth.

As a follow-up to the discussions of the January meeting, Mr. Foley gave more information on 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. Open from 6 AM to 4PM daily.
- Vintage Soul at 52 Main St – A small home décor shop that previously had operated solely online and now opens their new brick and mortar store on Saturdays and Sundays, 10 AM to 2 PM.
- Whole Child Therapy Center at 50 Main St – Pediatric physical and speech therapy by appointment.

The old Bijou building has cleaned up the three storefronts to make them available for rent. Mr. Foley noticed a coming soon sign and Ms. Melanson recalled that it might be for a florist. The sign presently hanging in the window is for “Whaling City Florists.”

Mr. Carr arrived at 6:38 PM.

Mr. Foley also noted previous local business spotlight participant, Fairhaven Pharmacy. He then switched to talk about an established business, Ted’s Farm Equipment at 15 Shirley Street. It is open from 8AM to Noon currently, offering tractor equipment and items from the owner’s farm in Tiverton, Rhode Island.

40R Working Group Update:

Mr. Foley pivoted from that previous point to present his current concept for Phase 1 of the 40R. It would consist of several small areas spread out along Bridge Street, Huttleston Ave, and Alden Road. They would be concentrated Fairhaven Commons and Plaza Way, with additional areas along Bridge Street and Shirley Street. If possible, he would like to add additional areas such as the former Mazda dealership now owned by Bask. The areas in within Plaza Way were marked out in the 1996 Master Plan.

The area on Bridge Street currently has a record shop and day spa but is otherwise open for commercial development.

For further clarity, here is Mr. Foley's proposed map with the 40R redistricting areas marked in green:



Mr. Foley also outlined how the waterfront is already zoned for mixed use and the 40R would add mixed-use zoning within the existing commercial and industrial zones highlighted above. He would like to see a combination of residential and commercial in these areas. As for the existing mixed-use district, the by-laws could be adjusted to give further flexibility in terms of what could be built in that area, which could be done separately from the creation of the 40R districts. Additionally, Consultants Dodson & Flinker, who had been running the community participation aspect of the 40R development, are now focused on the design standards.

Mr. Carr asked if there had been any plaza owners along Route 6 itself who were interested in participating in the 40R. While Mr. Foley had tried to contact the owners of Sarah's Way (The CVS Plaza), it is currently owned by a foreign LLC and had not responded to his outreach. If possible, Mr. Foley would like to see some of the plazas adapted to add an additional floor of housing above the commercial shops. Mr. Carr cited the housing development at 86 Bridge Street behind St. Anne's Credit Union as a good example of the housing he would like to see in the 40R District. Mr. Foley pointed out the area behind the Rockland Trust Bank, currently used as a parking lot that could be reworked for a similar purpose.

As discussed in previous meetings, Mr. Foley would prefer to zone a larger area under 40R, but that would raise the number of possible additional housing units to outside the Town's comfort zone. While

he would need to run the exact calculations, the highlighted areas in the map would equate to roughly 500 additional housing units.

Ms. Melanson brought up the area at the end of Alden Road behind the Staples, but Mr. Foley thought that it might not be developable according to a past wetlands survey. The Ocean State Job Lot Plaza has no interest in participating. When asked about Fairhaven Commons, it would be divided up along the existing internal roadways and Plaza Way is divided up due to the existing powerlines.

In response to Mr. McLaughlin's questions about future development, Mr. Foley explained to think of this map as purely Phase 1 of the 40R project. He has spoken to the state about instating a cap on the number of housing units to be added and they said that the regulations would be reviewed over the summer. Mr. Foley would also like to see if the housing units could go up multiple stories in order to get a view of the water. He has requested drone photos be taken by the police department and water views start at around six stories up. Having taller housing developments would allow for a mix of prices in the housing units to allow for both affordable and more expensive units. In discussing the language of the bylaws, once the original 40R passes Town Meeting, it would be easier to make additional changes in the future and to include language for flexibility of expanding the area by up to 15%.

Mr. Foley is planning to discuss the 40R group at the next Planning Board meeting on 3/28 to discuss the bounds of the district, the design standards, and the language of the bylaws. The 40R will not be voted on at the upcoming Town Meeting so Mr. Foley is taking the time to study the state's model bylaw with the lawyers on the project along with developing the design standards. He hopes to reach a reasonable consensus between what the Town would want and what the property owners would accept.

As Mr. Carr was now present, Ms. Melanson suggested returning to the previously tabled agenda items.

Review and Approve the Minutes of the January 19, 2023 meeting:

The motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2023 meeting was made by Mr. McLaughlin and seconded by Mr. Carr. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Use of EDC FY23 Funds:

Mr. Foley covered some of the previous uses of the EDC's funding such as the update to the Town's economic statistics, funding towards the 1-Stop for Growth Grant, and towards the 40R consultants. He would also like to put the FY23 funds towards the 40R Consultants, but Mr. McLaughlin asked if the language could be made broader or if some could be reserved. Regarding the 40R's budget, Mr. Foley noted that there is still approximately \$100,000 remaining. However, the project will go on longer than expected so extra funds could be useful. These funds have already been appropriated and need to be allocated by the end of June.

At Ms. Melanson's request, the committee decided to hold off on the actual vote until the next meeting with the hopes for more attendance and further debate on how best to spend the funds.

Grants Update:

Mr. Foley's grant update was essentially the same as the prior meeting. Here is the condensed format in a table for reference:

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

An additional note:

- The Buzzards Bay National Estuary Mini-Grant went towards the preservation of Salt Wind Farms on Scoticut Neck.

Mr. Foley will be sending out expressions of interest for the next round of the 1-Stop for Growth Grant for further assistance with the updates to Bridge Street to add sidewalks, bus stop covers, and other amenities along the stretch between Route 6 and Alden Road. He would apply for a planning area grant to hire a traffic and engineering firm to improve the intersection of Scoticut Neck Road and Manhattan Ave, which was the site of a recent fatal accident. This is especially relevant since the Planning Board is discussing making that area mixed use.

Other Business:

There was no additional business for this meeting. For the next meeting, there are plans to discuss the SPREDD funds, the 40R, and how to budget the EDC's FY23 funds.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is tentatively planned for April 20, 2023.

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Carr and seconded by Mr. McLaughlin.

The meeting was called to a close by Ms. Melanson at 7:13 PM.

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