

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, November 30, 2023, at 6:30 PM

MEETING TYPE: Economic Development Committee

Chair's Welcome and Media Notification:

Ms. Melanson called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Before beginning the business of the meeting, she congratulated the Fairhaven Blue Devils High School Football Team on their MIAA Division Six State Championship win.

There was not a quorum present at the start of the meeting. As such, items that required votes were skipped over until Ms. Ferreira arrived part way through the meeting.

Quorum and Attendance:

Present at the start of the meeting: Cathy Melanson, Chair; Patrick Carr, and John Hinds.

Arrived during the meeting: Karyn Ferreira

Not present for this meeting: Stasia Powers, and Suzanne Dwyer.

Also present for this meeting: Director of Planning & Economic Development, Paul DiGiuseppe, and Recording Secretary, Stephanie Fidalgo

Correspondence:

There was no correspondence for this meeting.

Discussion on the Business After Hours Event that took place on Thursday, November 16, 2023:

This item was taken up early before Ms. Ferreira arrived.

Mr. Hinds praised the event as he made positive connections with a few business owners and enjoyed the speakers. For a future events, he would like to see the same speakers return, along with having time

for Mr. DiGiuseppe to give a planning update, and time for public comment. He would also like to see the event be better publicized, specifically suggesting a press release in the Fairhaven Neighborhood News.

Mr. Carr thanked Ms. Melanson and Mr. DiGiuseppe for their work on the event. He also appreciated the speakers at the event, Samia Walker from EforAll and Rob Anderson from Mass Development. He specially praised Mr. Anderson who also brought up housing as an important aspect of economic development.

Ms. Ferreira arrived at 6:39 PM. With her arrival, Ms. Melanson then requested to return to the previously skipped agenda items.

Review and Approve minutes of the September 28, 2023, and October 19, 2023 meetings:

Mr. Carr made a motion to accept the minutes of September 28, 2023 and was seconded by Mr. Hinds. The motion passed unanimously. (4-0)

Mr. Carr made a motion to accept the minutes of October 19, 2023 and was seconded by Ms. Ferreira. The motion passed unanimously. (4-0)

EDC Committee Assignments:

Ms. Melanson discussed Mr. Hinds' previous outreach efforts to verify the status of the 535 businesses on file with the Town Clerk's office, mostly via cold calling. However, the committee had not officially voted to allow Mr. Hinds to speak on behalf of the EDC in this capacity. Ms. Melanson wished to rectify the situation to allow Mr. Hinds to continue his research and outreach.

Mr. Carr made a motion to have Mr. Hinds connect with businesses as a member of the Economic Development Committee.

Before the motion could be seconded, Mr. Ferreira inquired about Mr. Hinds' outreach. He explained that he spoke in the capacity as a member of the Economic Development Committee, informing businesses of their dues and registrations, and requesting feedback. His main purpose was to verify if businesses were still in operation. However, he ran into issues due to using his personal cell phone for the calls and his lack of a business card or letter to verify being a member of the EDC. Going forward, he would prefer to make the calls from Town Hall.

Ms. Melanson did consider Mr. Hinds outreach to have a positive impact, with business re-registrations having an uptick. However, she had not realized the need for a Committee vote on the matter until discussing it with Town Administrator, Angie Lopes Ellison. Ms. Melanson also noted that the new business forms included email collection.

Ms. Ferreira seconded Mr. Carr's motion. The motion passed unanimously. (4-0)

Vote from the Committee about Future Assignments:

Ms. Melanson requested that the Committee vote to allow the Chair to be able to give assignments without a Committee vote in case of a lack of a quorum. The Committee currently has an open position and there have been a few meetings without a quorum within the last few months.

Mr. Carr made a motion that the Chair could handle future assignments without a quorum and was seconded by Mr. Hinds. The motion passed unanimously. (4-0)

Discussion on the Business After Hours Event that took place on Thursday, November 16, 2023, continued:

After the other business had been completed, Ms. Melanson returned to the discussion on the Business After Hours Event and requested feedback from Ms. Ferreira. Ms. Ferreira considered it to be a small but successful first event and would like to see it grow further.

Ms. Melanson concurred that she considered the event to be a success and would like to plan future events on a quarterly basis, though she was considering different formats such as forums. Ms. Ferreira encouraged further outreach as a committee.

The Committee discussed different types of outreach such as ribbon cuttings and Ms. Melanson's commercials for new businesses that opened in 2023. There was a brief discussion about offering a commercial recording package for businesses, but the Committee was ultimately not in favor due to a variety of complicating factors. Ms. Melanson did consider having a business expo as a quarterly event that would be open to the wider public with Fairhaven TV present to record the event.

Mr. Hinds considered the inclusion of speakers at events to be very appealing and that a forum with public comment would be beneficial. Ms. Melanson hoped for word of mouth would encourage further attendance at events. Given the spending on the event, Ms. Melanson noted that the postcards were priced higher than expected, but she wanted to use only Fairhaven businesses in these events. For future planning, she would like the next event to be in March at the end of the First Quarter of 2024, with the date and details to be decided upon at the January 2024 meeting.

On the inclusion of food, the members did discuss better timing with serving.

Mr. DiGiuseppe brought up the work being done in Bridgewater to have small business training sessions on topics like financials and fundamentals with a local business sponsor. He suggested reaching out to EforALL or a similar organization to conduct such a training. He would also like to receive further feedback from local businesses to gain a better understanding of their needs. While Ms. Melanson liked the idea, she would want any training sessions to be free to attendees.

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

Ms. Melanson and Mr. DiGiuseppe both offered to support Ms. Ferreira with re-opening Tropical Smoothie Café. The Committee also offered additional congratulations to the Fairhaven High School Football Team.

Mr. DiGiuseppe also mentioned that Cana on Bridge Street would be opening the next day and the Committee briefly discussed how other businesses were progressing. Mr. DiGiuseppe offered a reminder to shop locally for the holiday season and specifically cited his recent visit to Seconds Count in the Lifestyles Plaza off Huttleston Ave.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 18, 2024 with no meeting scheduled to take place in December. Ms. Melanson wished the Committee members happy holidays and a happy new year.

The meeting was adjourned by Ms. Melanson at 7:12 PM.

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

Approved January 18, 2024