

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, February 15, 2024, at 6:30 PM

MEETING TYPE: Economic Development Committee

Chair's Welcome and Media Notification:

Ms. Melanson called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

Quorum and Attendance:

Present at the start of the meeting: Cathy Melanson, Chair, Karyn Ferreira, John Hinds, Nils Isaksen, and Stasia Powers.

Arrived during the meeting: Patrick Carr

Not present for this meeting: Suzanne Dwyer.

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

Review and Approve minutes of the January 18, 2024 meeting:

Ms. Ferreira made a motion to accept the minutes of January 18, 2024 and was seconded by Mr. Hinds. The motion passed unanimously. (4-0)

Mr. Carr arrived at 6:35 PM.

Correspondence:

There was no correspondence for this meeting.

Plans for the April 11, 2024, After Hours Business Event:

Ms. Melanson reviewed the basic format for the April 11, 2024, After Hours Business Event, noting that it would start with a forum discussion and presentations and then have time to mingle and network. The Committee discussed how to advertise the event, with Ms. Melanson wishing to have postcard printing done inside Town Hall. Other advertising avenues discussed were utilizing the email list, advertising in the Fairhaven Neighborhood News, placing posters at Town buildings, social media, and hand-delivered invitations.

The Committee then discussed the format, agreeing on the forum discussion and presenters up first followed by the networking session. As for the timeline for advertising, Ms. Melanson suggested having

postcards and advertisements ready for early to mid-March, with March 21, 2024, as the hard deadline. Mr. Hinds outlined an idea of multiple advertisements and articles in the Fairhaven Neighborhood News.

The Committee then reviewed the plans once more, with Ms. Powers noting that the auditorium would have to be officially reserved first.

General Discussion on John Hinds Survey and Business Listings:

Mr. Hinds was working with Cable Director Derek Frates and Town Social Media Manager Alyssa Botelho on creating a survey for the citizens. He was also working with Mr. DiGiuseppe, Interim Town Clerk Elisabeth Horan, and Planning and Economic Development Administrative Assistant Sue Masten, to create a comprehensive list of all the businesses currently operating in Fairhaven. Part of this process was also ensuring that the businesses were in compliance with their local business license filings, though Ms. Melanson noted that LLCs filed at the state level rather than locally. As part of this process, all new forms included a space for an contact email.

Mr. Hinds covered the plans for the survey, handing out a summary of his meeting with Mr. Frates and Ms. Botelho to the Committee. Rather than asking about specific businesses, the survey would instead be an open call for business suggestions – either specific brands or a generalized type. Ms. Melanson asked for an informal straw poll to see if the Committee approved of this plan and the Committee members approved.

The survey would be advertised on various social media channels, including a variety of Fairhaven-related Facebook groups. They would also seek to have an article published in the Fairhaven Neighborhood News and have an option for paper entries. Mr. Hinds also covered the reasons behind the changes in the survey's format to a broader call for suggestions.

Mr. Carr made a motion for Mr. Hinds to continue his work on the survey and business listings and was seconded by Mr. Isaksen. The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

Before moving on, Mr. Hinds wanted to give credit to Ms. Masten's work in creating a unified business information spreadsheet. Mr. Hinds and Mr. DiGiuseppe were also working on gathering emails for businesses and Mr. Hinds and Ms. Horan were working on letters to contact businesses that were not included in the local business certificate list.

Updates from the Town Planner:

Mr. DiGiuseppe was planning to meet with the Small Business Administration regarding disaster planning for small businesses. He also had a recent meeting with Patricia McArdle, a local real estate attorney on several broads such as Habitat for Humanity, which had led to Mr. DiGiuseppe contacting Habitat for Humanity about finding a new location in Fairhaven. She had also suggested that the Town reach out to MassHousing for grant funding for mixed-use and housing studies. He had also met with Ian Trombly of One SouthCoast Chamber about their proposed Government Affairs Committee and promoting events. For local businesses, Mr. DiGiuseppe had met with Bob Gardner of Brownwell Boat Trailers about their global sales in the boating industry and their plans for a possible expansion.

Mr. DiGiuseppe was also looking into applying for several grants. One would be an Urban Agenda Grant to bring in a small business consultant to assist local businesses. He also hoped to find a possible grant to pay for a zoning bylaw consultant to help with overhauling the Town's zoning bylaws.

Mr. DiGiuseppe had also added a new page to the Town website on Finding a Job in Fairhaven, which included links to career pages for the larger businesses in Town, links to jobs in Fairhaven posted on Indeed and Glassdoor, and a list of training and educational resources.

For his 40R update, Mr. DiGiuseppe covered his recent meeting with the 40R consultants. Part of the meeting focused on the reintroduction of the Waterfront area into the overlay district and the data that the State required for this area regarding projected unit density and the design standards. Another part concerned the finalization of design standards for the Plaza district and the creation of the accompanying bylaw. Once work was ready on the Waterfront area, Mr. DiGiuseppe planned for a Working Group meeting to review the updated design standards. When Ms. Melanson requested a possible timeline, Mr. DiGiuseppe covered the work required by the state.

Mr. Hinds inquired about the 40R Working Group, and Mr. DiGiuseppe outlined that it was an informal group of citizens who offered their feedback on the 40R plans. Mr. Hinds also asked if there was any input from contractors on the 40R plans, but Mr. DiGiuseppe explained that there was not and that the Planning Board would be the authority over projects within the 40R districts. The Planning Department would work with developers on meeting the regulations, but the Planning Board would have the final approval. Mr. DiGiuseppe also covered the need to ensure that the 40R plans provided enough incentives for developers to meet the required design standards and the affordable housing unit requirements. He also explained that the need for detail was due to the State offering municipalities monetary incentives for the creation of affordable housing units.

Mr. Carr asked if the 40R consultants could focus on a specific area for approval, but Mr. DiGiuseppe explained that such actions could be considered spot zoning by the State. Instead, he recommended bringing back the full originally proposed Waterfront district, though noting that it could be modified. Mr. Carr outlined his suggestions for a more focused area, and Mr. DiGiuseppe explained that the area Mr. Carr was concerned about would be included in this proposed Waterfront district and that a larger district would allow for further redevelopment opportunities.

Ms. Melanson had her own concerns regarding the 40R's focus, but Mr. DiGiuseppe outlined that the 40R would be beneficial if both districts were fully considered and included. Mr. Carr was concerned that trying to get two larger districts approved by Town Meeting could be difficult and that a smaller project might be easier to sell. There was also discussion on whether a specific project's specifications could be reviewed by the State, with Mr. DiGiuseppe explaining that the State was concerned with the Town's overall 40R regulations.

There was a discussion on the timeline of the 40R Working Group, the design and development process, and the eventual approval process. Ms. Powers and Mr. DiGiuseppe covered the need for transparency, public input on the process, and the issues with the delays caused by the transitions between Planning Directors. Mr. DiGiuseppe also wished to adjust the regulations for the Waterfront to address the concerns of the Working Group and help to address infrastructure issues in the area as Public Works would also need to weigh in on the regulations.

The Committee also discussed the need and possibilities for smart, sustainable growth and redevelopment within the Town and to ensure that the 40R regulations would be in line with existing neighborhoods and contexts.

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

Ms. Melanson covered some updates, noting that there were plans for Burlington to move into the empty store front next to Marshall's on Alden Road. She also planned to record a new business commercial with a yarn shop set to open in March on Route 6. Additionally, she spoke to the owner of

the old Citizen's Bank building on his possible redevelopment plans, contingent on the 40R design standards. There were also hopes for Tropical Smoothie Café to reopen soon.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 21, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned by Ms. Melanson at 7:39 PM.

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

Approved, May 16, 2024