



Town of Fairhaven

Department of Planning and Economic Development

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2020 OCT -6 P 4: 03

Fairhaven Economic Development Committee

Thursday, August 27, 2020 – Via Zoom Remote

Minutes

FAIRHAVEN,
MASS.

1. Quorum/Attendance: Present, Chairperson Kevin McLaughlin, Bernard Roderick, Todd McGregor, Cathy Melanson, Eddie Lopez and Robert Espindola (attended part-time as he was also attending MRC (Marine Resource Committee) remotely as well.

Absent: Geoff Haworth

2. Minutes: January 20, 2020 – Bernie Roderick made a motion to accept the January 23, 2020 minutes and was seconded by Eddie Lopez. The motion passed unanimously by Mr. Roderick, Mr. McLaughlin, and Ed Lopez (the members who were present at this meeting.)

July 23, 2020 – Cathy Melanson made a motion to accept the July 23, 2020 meeting and was seconded by Bob Espindola. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Electric Aggregation Program – Renewable Energy Survey

Mr. Espindola stated this committee was apprised of the information at a previous meeting.

From Climate Reality Mass Southcoast, Laura Gardner, was on the call. She stated she was the Chair of Climate Reality and a vast majority of their members are from Fairhaven. She encouraged Fairhaven to do a 10% aggregation program for renewable energy. She stated that Conservation Commission and Sustainability Committee wrote in support of this program to the Select Board, and 60% of responders agreed with the plan. She said the charge would be approximately \$2.00 per month per household. They need to educate households that there is an opt out of the program

Mr. Espindola stated he has been open about his concerns, particularly to the business community and larger entities, that are not going to be impacted because they have their 3rd party renewables. He said that 80% of the employed in Fairhaven are by small businesses and he has more concerns for that group. His primary concern would be that people will be unknowingly put in this without realizing it, so he would suggest an opt-in versus an opt-out option.

Mr. McLaughlin agreed with Mr. Espindola regarding the opt-in versus opt-out. He stated it should definitely not be forced; and if there is that much support in the community it should be an opt-in option, for each taxpayer.

Mr. Espindola explained how the program came to be in Fairhaven, with Town Meeting voting in favor of it approximately four to five years ago for "good energy".

Mr. Lopez asked if there were any potential grants that may be available for renewables energy. Mr. Foley explained the PACE (Publicly Accessed Clean Energy) is a program/policy that the Select Board could adopt that allows businesses to get a long-term potentially lower cost loan to develop new efficiencies such as solar panels on the roof for a twenty year loan versus a seven. The load will also incorporate a new roof if that is needed as part of the rooftop solar. It also covers other heating and energy efficiencies.

Mr. Espindola stated it has gone to the Select Board, however Mr. Rees had a few concerns over the program, so was seeking more information. Mr. Foley stated that Anne Carreiro, Mr. Rees and himself met with the PACE Representative from Mass Development (Wendy) and have already had a discussion and that he could invite her to the Select Board to discuss more in the future if the committee so chose.

Mr. McLaughlin stated he will review past minutes, as he believes that she has already been before them to explain the program.

Ms. Melanson had to leave the meeting at 7:29p.m.

4. SPREDD, CARES Act Funding

Mr. Foley stated he attended a regional planning agency meeting (SRPEDD) about a Cares Act Grant that SRPEDD recently received. He said Fairhaven might be able to get an economic feasibility study tied to our current Redevelopment Study with the \$26,000 still left from the Best Practices grant as a match. He is also looking at Mass Development and will apply to grants that they may have that fit and are available. Mr. Foley is looking at different grant programs to do a feasibility study in the industrial area of the Redevelopment Target Area.

5. SEC Local Maritime ED Planning Grant:

Mr. Foley also announced the Planning Department and Harbormaster received a Local Maritime Economic Development Grant from the Seaport Economic Council (SEC) for \$50,000 to do a feasibility study for Union Wharf. This grant would be to hire a consultant to review whether there is anyway to increase the capacity of Union Wharf through additions, equipment or innovations at Union Wharf. Currently the wharf has the capacity for 16 lobster boats, 13 fishing vessels, and 3 public safety boats. He said the grant would advise if there is more they could be doing at the wharf.

Mr. McLaughlin stated his concern about what has already been done down there but said it would be nice to hear from an independent party.

6. Updated Select Board guidance on EDC

Mr. McLaughlin stated the Select Board met and revised the EDC charge. They dropped the Town Administrator as an ex-officio member and will replace him with another member to the Board.

Mr. McLaughlin stated he wanted to review the mission statement for the Committee and get back to the Select Board on what they expect from the board. He stated there were parts of the documents that were unclear. The phrase "attracting customers" perhaps say "attracting businesses", and Mr. Espindola agreed it was probably a typo.

Another part stated, "Encourage new development and development may be advisable to increase tax revenue income", Mr. McLaughlin stated he was not sure what that meant. Mr. McLaughlin said he would like the Select Board to be clearer in their definitions.

The Committee discussed the six at large members. They stated that Cathy Melanson was the member appointed by the Select Board. Mr. McLaughlin will review how many people should be on the Committee and they will go from there to advertise if another person is needed.

8. Rt6/240/Opportunity Zone Redevelopment

Mr. Foley reviewed the Route 6/240 target area and said he had a discussion with Mr. Mahady, who did the last Economic Study, and he has been contracted to update the economic statistics for the town and the Route 6/240 Target Area.

Mr. Foley thought they might also perhaps be proactive and take another look to see if the mitigation measures have improved over the last 25 years and see if it is possible to mine the landfill. It was attempted in the past and he would like to look at one of these grants and see if they can hire an expert to look at the history, technology and/or mitigation techniques and see if it has improved that would make mining the landfill feasible now in order to create future industrial land. He is looking at the Mass Development RETA Grant. An alternate might be looking at creating a transfer of development rights program for redevelopment.

Mr. Foley stated he spoke to the owners of the McDonald's Plaza and they seemed onboard to build up versus out, which has more wetland areas and is not very feasible. Mr. Foley explained other resources that could be considered. It has to be Town owned property, but could include the master plan and visioning for sites and districts; market feasibility and financial analysis, and surplus property reuse and activation assistance. Mr. Espindola reminded Mr. Foley that there was a significant solar field upon the landfill and it needs to be looked at carefully.

Mr. McLaughlin suggested the atlas tack property and/or the Rogers School property.

Mr. Foley stated he received a call from a real estate friend who may have a reputable developer that may want to look at Rogers School.

Mr. Lopez made a motion for Mr. Foley to apply for the Mass Development RETA Grant to use his discretion with Town owned properties and was seconded by Todd McGregor. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Foley gave a quick update on Stratford group that will be redeveloping the Oxford School into apartments for people over 50. They are hoping to break ground in 2021.

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

Bernie Roderick stated the current Building Commissioner has resigned. Mr. McLaughlin said they will be pulling back on the permit fee discussion at this time, as they await a new building commissioner and will discuss at a later date.

Mr. Espindola stated Mr. Rees has already started the process for new recruitment. Hopefully it won't be long he said. We do have a temporary commissioner in there. Mr. Espindola stated he did take the feedback of this committee back to the Select Board regarding the permit fees.

Mr. McLaughlin reviewed the Marine Resource Committee agenda for rules and regulations that seems to always be on their agenda. Hoping any review of any rules and/or regulations will be sent to this committee for comment.

Mr. Espindola said they hired a consultant to review documents and put together a draft of rules and/or regulations and the committee is now trying to fine toothcomb the process. They are trying to get a final document so that the public can be a part of the comment process for the document.

Mr. McLaughlin asked about a draft for next upcoming Special Town Meeting so the committee could process it before it goes to Town Meeting. Mr. Espindola asked Mr. Foley to work with Mr. Rees to get the list of draft warrants. Mr. Foley will get the draft and forward to Mr. McLaughlin to forward to committee members.

Mr. Foley stated that the Planning Board was reviewing a Short-Term rental bylaw for the Spring Town Meeting that would probably be of interest to the EDC. He will put that on the next Agenda.

Mr. McGregor stated he has a background in landfill, solid waste management and volunteered to assist Mr. Foley to move forward on the grant.

Next meeting is September 17, 2020.

Todd McGregor made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Bernie Roderick. Motion passed unanimously at 8:39p.m.

Respectively,

Patricia A. Pacella
Recording Secretary