



# Economic Development Committee

Town Hall · 40 Center Street · Fairhaven, MA 02719

TOWN CLERK

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

2021 SEP 22 P 12:36

PLACE OF MEETING: Town Hall for Members and remotely via Zoom for the Public  
DATE AND TIME: Thursday August 19, 2021 at 6:30PM  
MEETING TYPE: Economic Development Committee

**1. Quorum & Attendance: Present:** Kevin McLaughlin (Chair), Bob Espindola, Bernie Roderick, Cathy Melanson, Jessica Fidalgo and Travis Rapoza.

**Absent:** Ed Lopez

### **Welcome new Select Board Appointee:**

Mr. Travis Rapoza sent letter of Interest and was accepted to the committee.

### **Quorum and Attendance:**

Mr. McLaughlin called meeting to order, reviewed attendance for a quorum, and read the open meeting law for the record.

### **Review and Approve minutes of July 22, 2021 meeting:**

Mr. McLaughlin entertained motion to approve minutes; motion made by Ms. Melanson and seconded by Mr. Roderick. Mr. Lopez was absent and new member, Mr. Rapoza, abstained. The remaining quorum voted unanimously in favor of approving the minutes.

### **EDC Appointment to Rogers Study/Re Use Committee:**

The Economic Committee has been asked by the Select Board to appoint one member to the Rogers Re Use Committee. Ms. Melanson, who has volunteered her time working at the property and had expressed interest in joining the committee has submitted a letter of interest to the Select Board.

Ms. Melanson nominated herself and Ms. Fidalgo seconded.

Mr. McLaughlin also nominated himself. Mr. Roderick said he was also interested but would defer to the Chair. Mr. Espindola made a motion for the nomination and it was seconded by Mr. Roderick.

Mr. Rapoza asked the nominees to explain why they want to be on the committee.

Ms. Melanson reiterated that she has volunteered her time and has been involved with the committee.

Mr. McLaughlin believed this meeting was the first mention of nominating someone for the committee.

Ms. Melanson understands that the committee could not vote on a nominee before the Select Board decided on asking a representative from the Economic Committee. Mr. McLaughlin reiterated we work for the Select Board and only appoint when the Select Board asks.

Mr. Espindola stated the subject did come up in an earlier meeting and recognized Ms. Melansons' efforts and dedication. Regardless, the role is still open to any member of the Economic Committee.

Mr. McLaughlin pitched his reason for interest in the Rogers Re Use committee. He would like to understand more about plans for the building. He knows there have been several proposals from private sectors, which were met with resistance. He believes he can give a different perspective with no bias, no agenda, and no personal ties to the building.

Ms. Melanson believes that since she sent a letter of interest to the Select Board she should be nominated for the role from the Economic Committee. Mr. Espindola appreciates all efforts Ms. Melanson has made and time she has dedicated, but committee still has the right to vote. Mr. McLaughlin mentioned that the representative appointed should only look at the committee from an economic perspective.

Mr. McLaughlin made motion to vote. Ms. Fidalgo and Ms. Melanson voted in favor of Ms. Melanson. Mr. Espindola, Mr. Roderick, and Mr. McLaughlin voted in favor of Mr. McLaughlin.

Mr. McLaughlin was voted in as a member of the Rogers Re Use Committee.

Mr. Foley added committee meetings will be public meetings. Non-members are able and encouraged to speak and give input. He reiterated that the final vote on an RFP of the fate of the Rogers School building will rest with the Select Board.

#### **EDC Budget for next fiscal year:**

Last fiscal year, the Board put \$6,000 towards the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grant. The contracts for EDA have been signed and the Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD), our regional planning agency servicing 27 towns in Southeastern Massachusetts will submit to the EDA.

The Board did encumber money from last year and received the DLTA grant money from the state. Last year's funds have not been fully expended yet but will be spent as part of the DLTA grant.

Mr. Foley applied for two grants and is waiting to hear back on both of them. One is for \$75K under the One Stop Growth planning grant program. The other is through the Executive Office for Energy and the Environment (EEA) Office of Grants and Technical Assistance for \$50K. He applied to both with a \$6K match from this year's EDC money. If we get both grants we will either have to choose between them or perhaps we can use funds from the ARPA money that was already given to the Town from the Federal Government. This is part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money in which we already received half of a total of \$1.6 million the Town will receive in two phases.

Mr. Foley also stated the town still has \$26,000 from the Best Practices Grant from last year (FY21). This grant will aid in writing the overlay bylaw, which will adhere to the Smart Growth Zoning and Housing Act (Chapter 40R), along with enabling the town to hire consultants to create design standards. The Chapter 40R state statute allows high density mixed-use zoning and provides cash to towns that create residential units in places where they are not currently allowed.

Mr. McLaughlin asked if FY22 budget has been committed already. Mr. Foley stated we do not need necessarily need to use the money on one of the two grants if we can use ARPA money. Let's see which if either or both of the grants we get and then determine if we can use other funds so the EDC can invest in something else. Mr. Espindola mentioned leftover funds could be used for marketing purposes for the town.

Mr. Espindola gave an overview of the how the ARPA funds are distributed and the town's intentions with those funds. The town has received the first installment from the federal government, but is holding off on spending the money. Each town department is still planning, gauging upcoming projects and researching any other grants or resources available. Broadband infrastructure is an example where specialty grants may be available and ARPA funds would not need to be used.

The town has hired a consultant for the Broadband Committee to ensure we are being as efficient as possible. Once we get a plan then the board needs to spend money in this year. There has been some talk that if the first 50 percent is not spent then the remainder may not be awarded.

Mr. Foley added the state has given \$3 million to Bristol County to be distributed to the Town. The county is trying to figure out how to disperse the Federal money given to them for the Towns and for what purposes and rules the funds will have attached to them.

Mr. Espindola stated they will decide if the funds will be distributed per capita or on a needs basis. A per capita award would mean a more absolute amount. The state also has \$5 billion to disperse for capital projects and Mr. Espindola is working with State Representative, William Strauss, for feedback and recommendations.

#### **Union Wharf Feasibility Update:**

Mr. Foley has been working with consultant, Frank Mahady, from FXM Associates and also with Foth Engineering. The town is looking to see if we are able to do more at the wharf by assessing the demand and need for various alternative uses that could help drive economic growth.

Mr. Foley and the Harbor Master have reached out to shareholders. The Economic Committee and the Planning Board are working together to make an assessment of the property and brainstorming alternative uses and possible expansion for a service building, if allowed in the Designated Port Area (DPA). The study will look at whether the property can accommodate a fresh off the boat seafood market or house ships for a research institution or other appropriate potential uses.

The study will include analysis of costs, demand, impacts on existing users and residences nearby, dredging (currently in phase 5), environmental impacts and future resiliency. The main goal is to devise a site plan that would see if there is anything else we can do to further the town's economy. The consultant does not see any new piers or physical expansion except for the rights grandfathered rights pertaining to the footprint of the former MacLean's Seafood.

Mr. Espindola summarized that the primary objective is to find the best option for economic purposes. Mr. Foley assumes the consulting firms may come back with other ideas, given their knowledge of the history of the wharf.

Action: Mr. Foley to send the proposal to gain feedback from Economic Committee, Planning Board, and the Marine Resources Committee.

The Board is encouraged to submit comments by end of the month. Once the consultant has received the report, we should expect a final plan within 12-14 weeks with several public meetings along the way.

#### **Rt. 6/240/Opportunity Zone Redevelopment Study Town Planner Update:**

Mr. Foley outlined the purpose of the Opportunity Zone Redevelopment Study. In summary the study was designed to provide the town with information, alternatives and recommendations to support new development. The Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act, Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2004, codified as M.G.L. Chapter 40R,

encourages communities to restructure and reexamine land use and economic efficiency, by creating mixed-use smart growth zoning districts. Fairhaven has created mixed-use areas already including Downtown and Benoit Square. This is still conceptual, but these locations may be allowed to build up to four stories, whereas around Route 6, we might prefer only two to three stories. Mr. Foley thinks in the shopping plaza area we might go even higher. Mr. Foley hopes if they get the grants the consultant team will help us develop design standards with potentially higher maximum heights.

The Town did get a site readiness grant to look at the entire redevelopment area from the Mass Development Finance Agency. The grant awarded money for our consultant to perform ten phase-one environmental assessments, and three to four extensive assessments on those properties. The scoring criteria is based on a number of factors such as presence of wetland, past environmental issues, etc. When owners sell, they are required to do a phase one. This phase consists of a mostly desktop research to check land records, environmental history, a site review and whether there are other sensitive areas.

Mr. Foley will be meeting with the Plymouth and Brockton Bus Lines, which is interested in the former drive-in theater property. They recently received a license to compete with Peter Pan and have a conceptual plan to make a transportation terminal at this location as a stop between Woods Hole and T.F. Green Airport. They have other lines including a line from Woods Hole to Boston. They are looking for a Braintree like park and ride for the airport. Mr. Foley said he suggested they look at the DATTCO Bus Line property on Sycamore Street and talk to them. It's not as big a site but it is already paved, seems underutilized and would probably be quicker on and off the highway.

Mr. Espindola did not feel the drive-in theater location would be best suited for a bus terminal, since it is a high value location. He suggested the bus company look into an existing paved lot along Route 240 (former AT&T location). Mr. Foley said the Plymouth and Brockton Bus Lines is looking for a location with at least 5 acres and DATTCO was only 3-4 acres. The drive-in location has a total of 12 acres. Mr. Foley thought they might be able to lease from DATTCO and establish their market. The Plymouth Brockton bus presented a document to the Conservation Committee that had wetlands lines from 1987. These wetland lines need to be delineated for future projects.

Mr. Espindola stated this area is private property and we would be able to fund environmental assessments on the property to facilitate development by the Town. Mr. Foley added all three potential properties are on Bridge Street are eligible for phase 1 environmental assessments with the property owners permission.

Mr. Foley further stated the town has one million dollars in the transportation bond bill, in addition to the EDA looking into the marketability of industrial projects. The potential 40R zone, which has already been assessed and will bring commerce to the area will increase our chances in obtaining the million-dollar transportation bond bill.

Over the next few weeks, we will choose the 10 properties that will be assessed. Mr. Espindola asked if land on Bridge Street is suitable for a public safety building. The next step is to bring these sites to the fall town meeting. Additionally, if we can use our land, we would avoid purchase and engineering costs. The Bridge Street location would be ideal.

Mr. Roderick brought up the Complete Streets grant. Mr. Foley said it can bring in \$400K over a 4-year period. We just received \$324K and can still apply for \$75K in the next year or two. There are four bikeway projects underway: creating bike lanes on Alden Road from Whalers Way to Howland Road with a two-foot painted buffer and a five-foot biker lane on both sides of the street. A speed feedback sign was also granted on Scoticut Neck Road near Manhattan Way. Of the seventy projects listed on the Complete Streets Grant, six have been funded.

The ongoing advisory committee will meet twice a year to go over the best usage of Complete Streets funding. Mr. Foley suggested he could post a Complete Streets suggestion box for road safety.

Mr. Foley stated another project that the Bike Committee will be addressing with CPC funds is signage to direct for bikers to use the Little Bay bypass from the path to get to Scoticut Neck Road and West Island. The town has until next year to complete the Complete Streets projects.

The Shared Streets grants must be completed this year. Prospective projects include plans to improve the Howland and Alden, and the Alden and Glenview intersections, as well as redesign the bike path's entrance on Main Street.

**Any other business:**

No other business was raised.

**Next Meeting Thursday, September 16, 2021**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Roderick and was seconded by Mr. Espindola. Motion passed unanimously at 7:12 p.m.

Notes submitted by Kelly Camara