

**Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes – January 4, 2021**

A meeting of the Economic Development Committee was held on January 4, 2021 via remote participation pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order Imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place.

Present from the Committee: Angela Rowell, Chairwoman; Members Andrew Jolda, Nancy Healy, Chris Charniak; Town Administrator Doug Willardson (ex officio), Director of Community Development Carol Cyr (ex officio), Director of Planning & Economic Development Ann Morgan (ex-officio).

Also Present: Carole Marchand

Chairwoman Rowell called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. Ms. Rowell read the notice on the agenda regarding the Governor's Order noting the meeting was being recorded and that those seeking to record the meeting for their own benefit should notify the Chairwoman in advance. Attendance of those members present was taken by roll call: Angela Rowell - Present; Andrew Jolda - Present; Nancy Healy - Present; Chris Charniak - Present; Doug Willardson - Present; Carol Cyr - Present; Ann Morgan - Present.

1. Action Items

- a. Draft Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve the meeting minutes from July 22, 2020 as drafted made by Marc Becker, seconded by Chris Charniak. Motion passed 6-0 by roll call vote.

2. Staff Report – Town Administrator Doug Willardson reviewed an update on the economic development activities since the last meeting. Items discussed by the Committee were as follows:

a. Improve Physical Environment

- i. Main Street / East Main - There was some discussion on how to engage the business community along East Main Street to assist in future beautification efforts. Assistance from volunteers would be very helpful. Ms. Healy noted that she would put out the idea at the next WDBA meeting.
- ii. Dog Park - Ms. Marchand provided an update noting there are now two dog parks in Town - one at Memorial Beach opening tomorrow and one on High Street. Fencing at the High Street park will be installed next week. Ms. Cyr noted that naming of the High Street Dog Park will be a job for the Town. A plaque recognizing the original property owner will be installed but they don't want it named after them.

- b. Liquor Licenses - Mr. Willardson noted that Thai Lemongrass is interested in seeking a full liquor license. He reviewed the types and status of existing and potential new licenses. Several establishments have recently received licenses including The Rose Room and B Kind Café.

- c. Market Analysis - Mr. Willardson noted that the RFP for the I-395 Exit 2 property abutting Long Subaru would be going out tomorrow. Interest in the Kmart building / plaza continues. Recent inquiries were from a marijuana grow facility. It was noted that the property was not zoned for that use.

d. Downtown

- Munchies & Crunchies is seeking a permanent location in the downtown. Presently they are operating from the Fish & Game kitchen.
- Savvy Staffing has opened on Main Street.

- The property owner of the old furniture store is working to renovate the building. Ms. Cyr is working Mass. Development to find some financial resources for the property owner. The property owner may seek to install residential units on the upper floor. It was noted that it was an allowed use for the upper floors but not on the first floor.

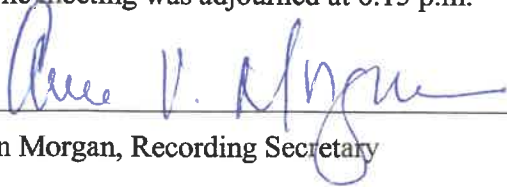
e. Grant Opportunities

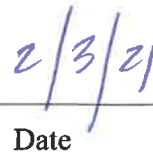
- i. Webster Regional Microenterprise Program - Microenterprise Assistance Grants. Ms. Cyr noted that this program is ready to launch and that she expects the materials to be ready for release by the end of the week. She reviewed the parameters of the program noting that it is funded through the Federal Community Development Block Grant program with money from the CARES Act. The program is for small business owners that have 5 or fewer employees. The maximum grant amount is \$10,000. Other eligibility requirements were reviewed. Information about how to apply for the grants will be posted on the Town's website and there will be a News Flash announcement for the main webpage.
 - ii. Applications for Community Compact grants are being accepted by the State. Mr. Willardson is working with staff to determine projects that could benefit from funds based on the grant criteria.
- f. Other: Ms. Cyr noted she recently met with Chris Robert who is interested in assisting the Town in creating an identifiable visual brand in the downtown area. He has a warehouse of items from the build out of the Samuel Slater Museum which might be used downtown and would welcome staff to come see if there's anything that might be useful. Ms. Cyr stated that she would organize a visit if anyone was interested. Ms. Morgan, Ms. Marchand and Mr. Willardson stated that they would be interested.

3. **Next Steps** – This Agenda item was passed over.

4. **Next Meeting** – February 1, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via remote participation / Zoom.

5. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Healy, seconded by Mr. Charniak. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote: Mr. Charniak - Yes; Ms. Healy - Yes; Mr. Jolda - yes; Ms. Rowell - Yes. The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.


Ann Morgan, Recording Secretary


Date

Minutes approved at the February 1, 2021 meeting.

EXHIBITS

- Agenda Item 2: Staff Report - Power Point Presentation, Economic Development Discussion, EDC Meeting 11/16/20; 8 slides / pages.