



Economic Development Committee Minutes
1 December 2023
12:00 PM

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 12/1/2023, held virtually via Zoom.

Called to Order: 12:03 pm

EDC Members Present: Catherine Usoff, Michael Carpenter, Patty Sutherland, Ann Chang, Dan Malloy, Sharon Tchon Gruet, Shirley Ming

EDC Members Absent: David Cote

Also present: Julie Pierce and James Fuccione

Preliminaries

Call the Roll – attendance is noted above.

I. Regular Business

- Review of meeting minutes from previous meeting November 3, 2023.
- Meeting minutes were approved by all members in attendance except Shirley M., who was not present at the November 3 meeting and abstained.

II. New Business

- Welcome new member, Sharon Tchon Gruet
- EDC membership and other committee liaisons.
 - EDC's meeting in Sep 2022 approved change of description, but the change never got on the select board agenda. The proposed changes were
 - Select board member will not be a full member.
 - EDC director title should no longer contain land use.
 - Need planning board liaison to discuss 2024 town meeting zoning articles related to MBTA, South Acton, Powder Mill corridor to be discussed with EDC.
- Acton Business Boost Newsletter
 - EDC members should be signed up for the Business Boost which is a great resource for business community.

- Julie would like EDC member support to get more businesses to sign up and read the newsletter.

III. Update from Economic Development Director - Julie Pierce

[Economic Development Director Updates 120123.pdf \(acton-ma.gov\)](#) (See meeting agenda repository)

Public Art

- Julie is managing a grant that was used to commission 4 murals and 3 benches to locate at local businesses. One mural has been completed on the side of the building near Acton Wine & Spirits in Kelley's Corner. Two benches have been placed, one at El Huipil and one near the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail behind Pedal Power. The benches have been easier to place than the murals. Business people are enthusiastic about the art work but they don't usually own the buildings they are in. Julie is looking for an EDC member to volunteer to research contact information for the building owners to help facilitate the placement of the murals.
- Fran mentioned a West Acton building owner, Marc Foster, and will connect him with Julie
- Murals have been commissioned with drawings, but placement is being discussed.
- Sharon asked about putting art work on utility boxes and Julie commented that there are other grants in progress.

The West Acton Holiday Stroll is scheduled for Saturday, 12/2/23

- Catherine will attend

The MetroWest Partnership is hosting their annual conference on Tuesday, December 12, from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. in Framingham. The focus will be on the future of transportation and will feature the CEO of MA Department of Transportation. Julie is looking for a volunteer to attend on the town's behalf. No one volunteered during the meeting to attend this event.

Open Space and Recreation Plan working group is hosting a virtual public meeting on December 6th from 6:00-7:30 via zoom

- Ann and Fran plan to attend.

Intersection Safety Improvements Rt 27 & Rt 2 Eastbound Ramps. Live virtual Public Info meeting on Wednesday 12/13/23 at 7p

- Ann plans to attend.

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce Event – Dec 13 at Handworks Gallery on Great Road.

- Mike and Patty plan to attend.

2023 Shop Locals Holiday directory

- EDC should help encourage business owners to sign up to advertise their holiday promotions. To date, 56 companies have participated. Julie is looking to add more places, especially restaurants which are not currently represented well.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1yzlPz2ps6LXFgzRPkFKD8tLYfkFRyaBB7BNF6c0Wxr0/edit?usp=sharing>

Dan and Catherine agreed to help pick up “Small Business Saturday” signs after the end of the year.

Julie asked for an EDC member to review the draft of the town’s traffic calming plan with an eye toward potential impact on businesses.

- Sharon agreed to do this.

Disposition of 19-21 Maple Street

- RFP to come, tentative schedule is end of the month. Ann mentioned that another committee looked at options for this property some years back. Julie will see if she can find the report, maybe it is with the planning department.

Transportation

- Grant funding for taxi service, Acton Rides, was extended from end of the year, 2023 to June 30, 2024.
 - o This is an extension of the existing shuttle, Cross Town Connect.
 - o The service is available for rides that originate in Acton to locations within 25 miles outside of the shuttle hours, for eligible populations.
 - o Information is provided on the website, actonma.gov/transportation

Other Economic Development – EDC Member Updates:

- South Acton Vision and Planning Advisory Group – see update in separate document in repository (Catherine)
 - o Dec 12, 5:30 to 7pm in library
- Update on RH Adhesives permitting process (Mike)
 - o Planning board meeting went well.
 - o Conservation commission experience was pretty bad.
 - o Overall, it is a long and hard experience from business owner perspective.
- Community Info Session (11/15/23) on Powder Mill zoning (Ann)
 - o Highlights from the meeting include various overlay zoning subdistricts, increasing safety for pedestrians, more sidewalks to be added, and easy access to the water.
- EDC’s Response to Leaf Blower Initiative
 - o Sharon reviewed an extended version of the slides with selectmen Jim Snyder-Grant. There is an ask for enforcement officer for the article. The timeline is aggressive and there is not enough data on the long term effect on people of the radiation from charging.

- Fran commented that the initiative is still in its early stages. It is on the Select Board agenda again with public participation next Monday Dec 4.
- Dan commented that by the end of 2028, Home Depot will only sell battery powered garden equipment including leaf blowers. Michelle Ciccolo, state representation from Lexington introduced a bill at the state level to help landscape businesses transition to battery powered equipment. Landscape companies require mobile charging stations to make the transition viable. Dan suggested that EDC should focus on helping to fund the equipment transition. An initiative such as this is better at state level than at town level.
- Mike/Catherine commented that such legislation should focus more on incentivizing over punishing and help businesses advocate for state subsidy.
- Ann commented that individual level support usually overlooks the business impact.
- Julie commented that other towns that had similar proposal were using ARPA funds to help businesses transition. It is not an option for Acton as the ARPA funds have already been allocated.
- Business Networking and Communication Plan (Mike, Patty, and Dave)
 - Proposed Business Resource Alliance Group [BRAG Vision.docx](#)
 - Need to discover more about business database
 - Need more engagement from the business community and a communications platform that includes both push and pull aspects
 - James suggested a LinkedIn group

Review of the HDC Bylaws (Catherine

[Initial Research on HDC for EDC meeting 12.1.23.pdf \(acton-ma.gov\)](#)

- In addition to restrictions placed on structures within an Historic District, there is an 18-month demolition delay for any building in the town that has been deemed a cultural asset. These assets are under the purview of the Acton Historic Commission.

Next Steps and Action Items

1. Fran to follow up with select board on EDC membership changes and updated description to be posted to the website.
2. Subgroups to make progress on their issues and report back at the next meeting
3. Julie to find report from earlier study of 19-21 Maple Street potential uses.

Materials used in this meeting can be found at: <https://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-17585>

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm.

For more information about the Economic Development Committee, please send email to EDC@actonma.gov