

R E C E I V E
MAY - 2 2013
TOWN CLERK, ACTON

EDC Minutes – 21 March 2013

These are the meeting minutes from the Economic Development Committee (EDC) of the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. The meeting took place on 21 March 2013 at the Acton Town Hall.

The meeting was called to order shortly after 7:30 by Nancy Dinkel.

Present: Allan Gulliver, Ann Chang, Chris Pappas, Dave Clough, David Didriksen, Derrick Chin, Dick Calandrella, Larry Kenah, Nancy Dinkel

Missing: Doug Tindal

Doug Calenda, owner of Johnny Rockets, joined us to talk about his recent experience starting a business in Acton.

Minutes from the meeting of 17 January 2013, with minor corrections, were approved.

Summary

The meeting time was spent on two items.

- Conversation with Doug Calenda
- Review of selected articles for Town Meeting (items #4 and #6 from the meeting agenda)

Johnny Rockets in Acton

Doug Calenda is the owner of the newly opened Johnny Rockets restaurant located in Roche Brothers Plaza. He is an example of an established business expanding into Acton. As such, he brings years of experience dealing with cities and towns where he has opened restaurants.

He could not have been more positive. He said that his interactions with town officials were some of the best that he had experienced at two levels.

- He found Acton to be a welcoming environment for new businesses. He contrasted this with several towns in the area that were not interested in adding any more businesses.
- He also found the more practical aspects of his interactions (permits and the like) to be without problems.

Rather than replay the meeting transcript in these minutes, we will simply include some comments that reflect the overall conversation.

Interactions with Town Officials

- The message that he received in his initial conversations was “come to us”.
 - The people were welcoming a new business into town.
- Everyone was easy to work with.

- His building contractors had zero problems.
- It was an extremely smooth process.

Comments on Acton

- Acton Boxborough Regional High School is one of the most important assets in selling the town not only to prospective residents but also to business owners (such as the CEO of Johnny Rockets) looking to relocate to Acton.
 - The “kids” from AB working at his store are great.
- Acton keeps on planning.
 - Acton 2020 is the most recent example.
 - He is excited about the Acton 2020 plans for Kelley’s Corner.
- Acton has managed to maintain its “colonial feel”.
- His advice to us about fostering a welcoming environment for business is to invest in education and infrastructure for retail and similar businesses.

Extended Conversation

We took advantage of Doug’s presence to talk about more general topics than his specific store.

- He is not in favor of allowing drive through for all types of business. He felt that this would detract from Acton’s character and “colonial feel”.
- He thought that a health club might be a useful addition to the location being vacated by CVS.

Town Meeting Articles

Derrick Chin presented to the committee slides from seven articles that will be discussed and voted on at this year’s town meeting. These articles are related to issues that the committee has focused on during the past year. They are listed here in numerical order rather than in the order that Derrick discussed them.

Article	Presentation Name
28	Industrial Uses.ppt
35	Donation Collection Bins.ppt
41	Community Service Organizations.ppt
42	Heating Fuels.ppt
43	Medical Marijuana.ppt
44	Outdoor Sales.ppt
45	Commercial Instruction in Private Community Facilities.ppt

The general intent of these articles is to allow activities that should be allowed.

Industrial Uses

This topic appeared as part of the discussions with the tea company. The bylaw includes more careful definitions of, among other terms, manufacturing and distribution.

This article generated the most conversation on two fronts.

- It seems that certain businesses were in place and operating and no problems existed until people began to live nearby, in areas that were zoned as for industrial use. These residents complained about one or more aspects of the nearby businesses (noise, sight, etc).
- The screening requirements (block sight but not sound) fall onto the businesses rather than the residents.

Heating Fuels

This topic was raised during the discussions with Axe Brothers when people realized that including firewood as a “heating fuel” affected many businesses in Acton that either used firewood as part of their business or sold directly to the public. Additional “heating fuels” such as propane for outdoor grills also fell under the existing prohibition.

Remaining Warrant Articles

There was less discussion on the remaining articles. They were presented more as informational updates.

Dave Clough offered his opinion that the Donation Collections Bins article will generate the most excitement during town meeting.

Other Items

Nancy Dinkel suggested that the subcommittee working on making it easier to start a business in Acton talk with some of the groups who work with new businesses. These would include contractors and real estate people.

In Closing

At the conclusion of Derrick’s presentation, we decided to skip the standing agenda items and adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 9:43.