

Economic Development Committee - Minutes July 9, 2009

Library Meeting Room
Acton Memorial Library

Attending: Doug Tindal, Nick Francis, Kristin Alexander (staff), Terra Friedrichs, Ann Chang, Nancy Dinkel, Dick Callendrella, Joe Ianelli, Chris Pappas

Meeting called to order at 7:10 PM

The Town of Acton is facing a significant shortfall in revenue resulting from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' cutbacks in aid to the town. The state has offered towns the ability to raise revenues through a tax on restaurant receipts. The Economic Development Committee (EDC) position was that any tax would stifle economic development and would oppose such. Though, given the town's contemplated cuts to services, enacting such a tax may be the town's only remedies to meeting the town's budget obligations. The following motion was made: if a tax were to be enacted, the Economic Development Committee would recommend that (a) the increase in tax have a time stipulation placed on a given tax period and will roll back to the current tax rate, and (b) proceeds of the tax should be distributed to the Town rather than to the schools. Four (4) voted in favor; two (2) opposed.

The EDC had a discussion on Nick Francis's change of title status from Co-Chairman to Vice Chairman of the Economic Development Committee. Nick is also the Team Leader of the EDC's demographic project. Doug Tindal's status will change from Co-Chairman to Chairman of the EDC. All voted in favor.

The motion was made to approve minutes of the following EDC meetings: 12/18/08, 1/8/09, 1/15/09, 1/29/09, 2/19/09, 5/28/09, and 6/18/09. All voted in favor.

There was a discussion on the Use Special Permit application for 208 A Main Street. The restaurant is an ongoing business establishment that is looking to expand into the adjacent commercial space (Unit 208 B) which is currently vacant (but most recently a restaurant) by increasing its overall number of seats. There is no objection by the EDC for such an expansion.

Leigh Davis-Honn, Project Leader of the Marketing and Tourism program, was not able to make the meeting, but will be presenting the program to the EDC in two weeks.

Reference: 3.1 NEW Business Development "Attracting NEW Businesses" – Revised by Group January, Revised by TF 2-16-09, page IV. A. 2.

Reference: 3.1 EXISTING Business Development "Helping EXISTING Businesses Flourish" – Revised by Group January, Revised by TF 2-16-09 & 6-16-09 page IV. A. 4.

The discussion was on the effort for people with separate skills to take charge of each of these development teams: new business and existing business.

The motion was made to approve these two team programs as written. All voted in favor.

Discussion on membership has been tabled.

The EDC is planning on presenting before the Board of Selectmen its findings and accomplishments on November 2, 2009.

There was a discussion about the Farmer's Market that will be held in West Acton from 10 am to 1 pm on Sundays. The EDC will not participate in any efforts to promote the Farmer's Market at this time, but some members as private citizens are allowed to do so.

Nick Francis, project leader of the Demographics team has been collecting massive amounts of internet data and links to various websites. He has been viewing other town's websites to see their layout. The question Nick Francis poses is how and what will be placed as tabs for visitors searching the Town of Acton's website. Mark Hald is in the process of changing and updating the Town of Acton's website. Ann Chang suggested that Nick consults with Mark to find out what would be the limits and boundaries of the Town of Acton's website. Joe Ianelli asked what data collected would be essential to promoting the Town of Acton and the enhancement of businesses in the town. In addition, Joe asked that the EDC should seek volunteers from the high school to work on such a daunting task. Terra Friedrichs suggested that graduates may be a better choice. Kristin Alexander asked Nick how to move the team forward and what personnel will be needed to help categorize.

Dick Callendrella pointed out that the website is one of the promotional vehicles to market the Town of Acton. There are many other vehicles such as brochures, flyers, to name a few.

Doug Tindal reminded us that we have to focus on the task at hand, demographics, and follow the template that was created in November. What needs to be readily available to a customer and what do customers need to know about the Town of Acton? Therefore, the first mission for Demographics team is to continue to collect economic statistics. Information on Town of Acton's servers must be easy to find by the public. Kristin will e-mail the notes from the EDC 10/08 public meeting to the committee.

The next EDC meeting will be 7/16/09.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:25 PM.