



Town of Pepperell Economic Development Advisory Committee

1 Main Street, Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463-1644

Minutes – January 13, 2021 Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Stephen Themelis, Chair
Joyce Morrow, Clerk
Bruce Bonnevier
Kelli Ann Kinney
Chuck Walkovich

Committee Member(s) Absent:

Chet Babineau
John Masiello

Additional Attendee(s):

Jenny Gringas, Town Planner
Andrew MacLean, Town Administrator
Margaret Scarsdale, Select Board
Joanne Smith, PBA
Mark Vasapolli, PBA

Meeting Convened at 6:03 PM. Pledge of Allegiance took place. Meeting was recorded.

1. Minutes of December meeting

Minutes of the December 16, 2021 meeting were accepted and approved.

2. Discussion

Chair called the meeting to order, and welcomed the invited guests.

Chair stated that this was a special meeting called to discuss special budget request with Town Administrator. Mr. MacLean was present and chair asked him to address members with any comments. Chair asked Mr. MacClean for a quick synopsis of what he felt EDAC members should be considering to focus on this year. He continued by stating the two agenda items which were 1) to continue working with PBA to promote Pepperell's image and branding; and 2) downtown beautification.

Mr. MacLean summarized that FY2022 was showing no surprises and that it was looking like what he had expected. FY2022 revenue was looking pretty strong. FY2023 was looking like it was heading back towards the norm. He believes that things are looking good for Pepperell economically, and this is a very good time to be having this conversation. He believes that the time might be now to make some modest investments for things that Pepperell may need. He believes that EDAC should be guided by the Master Plan as it is the most recent/current document which outlines what the community desires. Modest investments in the items that EDAC has prioritized are probably within reach in Pepperell's near economic future.

It was believed that branding poses a challenge. It is often aligned with a tourism board; or the hospitality industry in a town or city will try to get together to create an image. Seacoast towns are an example where people go there anyway and towns try to draw tourists to their town vs the next town over. Perhaps collaboration with the PBA in developing Pepperell as a destination community for "Day Trippers" could potentially create a brand from that. It's believed that EDAC should not take that on itself, but working with the PBA would make sense. Pepperell is served by three Chamber of Commerce groups. They may have some good ideas/positive thinking to add to the mix.

Mr. Bonnevier asked about other values that we could bring to enhance Pepperell's image and branding. Perhaps being referred to as a "Day Tripper" destination. Discussion pursued regarding the topics of "branding" and "marketing" Pepperell. Clerk reminded group that these terms were generated during the Master Plan vision sessions and subsequent committee meetings. It was also a topic for discussion through the LRRP consulting funds received. Town Administrator provided his views on the subject to those attending the meeting. He believed that it was not a priority for Pepperell at this time, and could easily be worked through once we all know what "Pepperell wants to be known for" in the future. Mr. Vasapolli talked about the band concerts and 4th of July parade and fireworks which bring Pepperell people together as well as visitors from other local communities. There are things that attract people to Pepperell aside from the rail trail and other hiking areas. Just this year, the July 4th Committee sponsored the "light fight" and created maps for people to drive around the Town and vote on the best holiday lights. The July 4th Committee also sponsors the Fall Fest. Town Planner talked about the grants available to help Pepperell move forward with many initiatives.

Joanne mentioned that PBA is a member of the Chamber of Commerce. Currently there are nine board members and membership meets monthly. She reminded folks that PBA works with the Garden Club who maintains most of the public spaces around town (e.g., Town Hall front gardens, rotary, Rail Road Square clock park). PBA was instrumental in getting Nelson Brothers Landscape Contractors to perform Spring cleanup of the clock park area. Discussion pursued regarding towns like Winchester, Woburn, Fitchburg who allow local landscapers to "own" a specific area in each town where they create landscape venues, maintain the space(s), and are allowed to erect a small, attractive sign to market themselves. It was determined that before Pepperell could undertake a similar activity there needs to be an accounting of what spaces exist, who owns the land, and how to administer such a program. He agreed that the Town lacks sufficient resources (people) to

maintain these areas. Discussion lead into how we can work towards continual beautification of the downtown area to attract more foot traffic, businesses, etc. Mr. MacLean indicated his support of this type of initiative but cautioned that we move slowly since property ownership currently is questionable. Until we see the survey results which will delineate property/owners, we need not assume that we can hang banners where we want, or maintain properties not belonging to the Town, etc. He indicated that NGRID prefers that we not hang anything on the poles. Generally, we can work with NGRID and we can get to Yes with them. Generally, however, they do discourage it. In general, planters need a lot of TLC and Pepperell does not have the resources to commit to that. Pepperell can help with the planning, hanging banners, etc, and the Town might be able to help pay for some of these items. But on a long-term basis, the maintenance and upkeep cannot be expected. The current flags still hanging is an example of an initiative that has been put on the back burner for a few reasons. Mr. MacLean wants to be supportive of these initiatives, but EDAC and others need to be cognizant of the cost and manpower required to maintain such a program. Right now, we don't have the resources.

Town Planner explained the use of the current grant to address the MUOD, design public spaces, create design standards, Form-Based codes, and general details for carrying out the plans created by the consultant organization selected for the Rail Road Square downtown commercial area.

Mr. Vasapolli commented on a drawing he saw at Town Hall a few years ago that depicts before and after renderings of Main Street from the rotary down over the bridge through to Walgreens. He didn't know who drew it up or if it's still there, but something like that would help to get more people behind it. Town Planner confirmed that that was exactly what the consultant mentioned having available to show Pepperell residents what the downtown commercial area could look like in the future. We are at the initial steps to working towards this objective. She asked that if anyone was interested in being included in the working group/committee, to let her know.

Chair indicated that the beautification project should be on next month's agenda to keep the momentum going and move forward with this initiative.

Select Board Scarsdale talked about the 2021-2022 Goals and Objectives. She focused on the Economic Development segment which followed along the theme of the Master Plan and welcomes EDAC members' comments and feedback. Mr. MacLean talked about the many grants that Pepperell has received over the past years. His office is putting together a tracking database to be able to report back to Town residents regarding what the Town needs and what grants have been received. Group went through the five bullet items and commented on the status of each accordingly.

Mr. Walkovich was asked to give a brief overview of the status of the MPIT recommendations. He mentioned that a lot of work has been accomplished during the months of 2021, and that some of the heavy lifting items are ahead for the various committees to delve into and work on during 2022 and beyond. Accolades to Town Planner for getting many of the zoning-related initiatives under way. Will be asking other

players for updates to put together a status report for May 2nd Town Meeting.

Chair commented on current situation with NMCOG Executive Director replacement fiasco. Person selected to fill the vacancy of recently-retired Executive Director resigned after only being in position one week for training. NMCOG has been a major resource to Pepperell and it's important that members know what has been happening there.

Chair asked if there were any more items for discussion. There were none.
Chair thanked outside attendees for participating in the meeting.

Chair then asked for a Motion to Adjourn.

3. Adjournment

Motion was received and approved to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.

4. 2022 EDAC Meeting Schedule

February 17
March 17
April 21
May 19
June 16
July 21
August 18
September 15
October 20
November 17
December 15