



Town of Pepperell Economic Development Advisory Committee

1 Main Street, Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463-1644

Minutes – April 22, 2021 Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Mark Mathews, Chair
Joyce Morrow, Clerk
Chet Babineau
Kelli Ann Kinney
John Masiello
Stephen Themelis
Chuck Walkovich

Committee Members Absent:

Additional Attendee(s):

Deb Fountain
Andrew MacLean
Margaret Scarsdale

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

1. Minutes of March 18 meeting

Minutes of the March 18, 2021 meeting were accepted and approved.

2. Discussion

Chair started the meeting by welcoming Andrew MacLean to the meeting, Chair stated that the purpose of the meeting was to look for direction from TA regarding aligning economic development and what the Town is doing.

TA discussed his frustration with the process of debating the need for a fulltime planner. He would like to see more alignment with what the Town wishes to accomplish and having us all move forward in a similar direction. He iterated how coming to a Town Meeting with board/committee consensus on any given matter, would be more effective when appearing before residents and getting items approved. He asked that we continue to have meetings to discuss issues and align thinking. He asked what EDAC members needed from him and/or SB in terms of understanding what our short- and long-term priorities are as EDAC members start pursuing ideas that each one has.

Chair asked going forward what would be the best way to approach him regarding issues at hand. TA agreed that there was a lack of communication from both sides, and encouraged more dialogue between the different boards/committees and his office. TA suggested opening communications especially during the annual budget process. Discussion ensued regarding FinCom's roles and responsibilities in connection with TA's budget process.

Discussion followed regarding EDAC's reporting relationship. Most Committees are aligned to a Town Department head in that specific area. EDAC's direct alignment is the TA and SB. Going forward, the possibility of being aligned to a Town department (e.g., Planning Board, Finance, etc.) is up for consideration.

Chair summarized his ideas regarding the "Vision of Pepperell". He talked about what Pepperell wants to be and how we would describe Pepperell to a visitor. He suggested that EDAC members think about comments/additions to his "Ideas" list. He suggested writing a paragraph that would incorporate everything about "Pepperell Today" that we would want both residents to know and be proud of and for visitors to understand what Pepperell is all about – or that they love it so much – visitors just like coming here. Mr. Masiello talked about his experience with surveys and suggested that be something to think about sending out to residents.

Members discussed some of the topics on the list as being conversations to have with town residents, business owners, etc. The purpose would be to gain consensus on what residents want. Then EDAC members could help coordinate with an anticipated positive (win/win) outcome.

Question: Does EDAC want to wait for other initiatives to start, or does EDAC want to move forward with garnering a visual/philosophical idea of what Pepperell residents really want to see/not see in Town? Feedback will then provide the basis for EDAC's involvement. EDAC could then work with the various department heads on a project-by-project basis. Further, depending on the issues being addressed, the head or chair of the various organization would then take to the TA and SB for discussion.

Chair stated that his question still remains: What does EDAC want to become? He asked members to think about the list and pick out ten and group them into what could later become a narrative. He also suggested that EDAC start to communicate with other committees/TA/SB so that all members are working towards the same goals and objectives, in particular, the MP Recommendations implementations.

The Masiello's talked briefly about the history and current activities of the PBA. They expressed gratitude for all of the small businesses throughout Town who have contributed positively to the Town over the years. They chronicled all of the various projects and initiatives the PBA sponsored and was responsible for the creation of events and landmarks such as the Clock Tower at Railroad Square, the Town Gazebo, the Duck Race, to name a few. It was suggested that perhaps Joanne Smith become more involved with EDAC and perhaps reach out to NMCORG to determine PBA's role and what steps should be taken to include in any grant finding initiatives, grants, and implementation steps to help grow

and maintain PBA's involvement in the Town. It was suggested that the more buy in we get from other Town groups, the better the chance of getting something approved and moved forward in the Town. It was also suggested to research a way to obtain statistics on the percentage (or number) of Pepperell residents who work from home, and at what percent? This information would be vital with respect to marketing Pepperell to any individuals and/or businesses interested in relocating to Pepperell, as well as for planning any additional commercial and/or industrial properties that could be available for such use.

Chair asked members to review the idea list and to think about a vision for what Pepperell could/should look like going forward.

Chair asked for updates to the MPIT recommendations. Mr. Themelis reached out to Susan Edwards on the Climate Change Council and they agreed to talk further. Susan mentioned that they were working on some of the MPIT recommendations (mostly from ConsCom). She was interested in knowing where to obtain certain statistics and information. They are looking into ways to reach the residents and get their messages out on what the CCC is doing, how it impacts residents' families and lives, and how to help the community regarding energy efficiency now and in the future. We need to think about how EDAC can collaborate with her. Mr. Walkovich added that Susan Edwards was in charge of the community outreach communications initiative and that's why she reached out to Stephen after the CEN Speakers' Night event. CCC was looking to partner with Nashoba Valley Trust, the Watershed, and the Library.

It was proposed that EDAC invite Susan Edwards (and/or others) to a future EDAC meeting. With Susan's background in media and communications, it might be beneficial from all perspectives that we can collaborate and work together. Mr. Walkovitch added that Ken Hartlage was the Chair and that he was a great gentleman. It was suggested that we invite both Ken and Susan to a meeting.

Chair asked: What questions would we ask them? What would we want them to talk about? Mr. Themelis suggested asking them: 1) What they want to accomplish; 2) How many goals are they working on and would like to see prioritized and moved forward; 3) Provide examples of something real that they could use as an example – e.g., take someone's property and show reasonable changes that would lead to mitigating climate change, et.

It was suggested that Ken Hartlage and Susan Edwards be invited to the next EDAC meeting (May 20).

Chair and Mr. Walkovitch added that the key takeaway from all of the discussions concerning MPIT is that the more collaborate committees and boards are, the more action items get done. Over the past months, there has been more communications between town departments, committees and boards than ever before. The MPIT Recommendations that have joint responsibility also foster that. The biggest heavy lift that the Town has before it is the *total Rezoning* of Pepperell and, more specifically, the downtown area. That is going to be the *Highest Impact* and have the *Heaviest Lift*, and it will need everyone working

together on that. GoToMeeting has allowed for better communications, integrations, and socialization of Town departments, committees, and boards as well as engaged citizens. We need to continue building on the momentum seen from the past MPIT meeting initiatives, and we need to continue along these lines going forward.

Regarding the earlier suggestion for a survey, Deb Fountain confirmed that the MP confirms what Town residents want through the documented MP Visionary Sessions.. It's not necessary to redo or re-invent the wheel. Deb confirms a lot of activity going on as a result of the continuing talk about communications and collaboration. She believes this is awesome. She wonders if a Saturday GTM get together with all of the committees giving a five-minute presentation about what's going on, and then open it up for questions/ discussions.

Mr. Masiello summarized the status of Lomar Park. Infrastructure issues are ongoing since the property was developed years ago. No current space availability. Issues still exist regarding fees, property maintenance, etc. Current conditions are frustrating and there is little to no way of making any changes. Current businesses have maintained their properties and some have not. The point was made that the existing businesses contribute to the Town but in a limited way. Taxes paid for businesses go mainly to Police, Fire, and the town for certain things. But not one student is being covered from tax monies paid to the Town. What they give back is that they are not a heavy burden on the Town like some other groups. There is no current space available in Town for any future industrial use. That's where Zoning comes in. It's all about Zoning.

Chair asked if there were any more items for discussion.

Chair asked for a Motion to Adjourn.

3. Adjournment

Motion was received and approved to adjourn at 7:47 p.m.

4. 2021 EDAC Meeting Schedule

May 20

June 17

July 15

August 19

September 16

October 21

November 18

December 16