



Town of Pepperell Economic Development Advisory Committee

1 Main Street, Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463-1644

Minutes – May 19, 2022 Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Stephen Themelis, Chair
Joyce Morrow, Clerk
Chet Babineau
Kelli Ann Kinney
Chuck Walkovich

Committee Member(s) Absent:

Bruce Bonnevier
John Masiello

Additional Attendee(s):

Linda Bisbo (Pepperell Garden Club)
Diane Cronin
Deb Fountain
Jenny Gringas
Theresa LeBlanc (Pepperell Garden Club)
Joanne Smith (PBA)
Paula Terrassi

Meeting Convened at 6:02 PM. Pledge of Allegiance took place. Meeting was recorded.

1. Minutes of April Meeting

Minutes of the April 21, 2022 meeting were accepted and approved.

2. Discussion

Chair called the meeting to order and welcomed guests. Chair stated that the meeting discussions would follow the agenda. First item was the “Adopt an Island/Spot” program and procedures. He stated that we wanted to make this as simple as possible and not make a lot of work for the Town. Chair gave a brief overview of the list sent out in advance to attendees which cited policies in place in numerous towns throughout Massachusetts. He included criteria each town developed in carrying out this project. He stated that numerous towns are currently using this program to help beautify areas around town without relying on municipal departments and community groups/organizations. He

suggested that attendees search the internet and review what other towns are doing. Policies vary town t. EDAC took the best from all towns which Pepperell can streamline for its own criteria/indemnity. He asked if EDAC members had anything more to add before opening the discussion to attendees.

Clerk thanked those present for taking the time to attend the meeting, review the information sent in advance, and for their dedication and hard work over many past years in making various spots around town attractive and well maintained. Clerk pre-empted ensuing discussion by saying that EDAC was merely reacting to a request made by the TP regarding this project and that in no way would it replace what is already being done unless the respective organization wanted it to. This was merely a mechanism to put into effect a way for local landscapers, businesses, and/or non-profits to showcase their skills or market their respective businesses and/or services, etc.

Garden Club members present said that they would more than welcome the help, and that they are not offended at all. They believe that this is a great program and would support. Garden Club mentioned the clock park at Rail Road Square as being a very noticeable area that needs constant attention. It was understood that the clock park and the Gazebo at Town Field is under PBA representative. Joanne Smith, said that in the past year or two she worked with a local landscaper to maintain/mulch the clock park at Rail Road Square. She said that PBA paid for the mulch. She mentioned that the PBA was also responsible for the maintenance of the town field Gazebo. At the time, the landscape company she contacted for the clock park wasn't interested in putting up a sign acknowledging their work. Also, they did not return to complete maintenance, etc. Joanne was not sure why they didn't maintain the area once the initial cleanup was done. In any event, those present agreed that the proposed program should be presented to the Select Board and Town Administrator for approval. Final details would need to be worked out by the Town Administrator/SB as to who would administer the program, provide a list of available islands/spots to be offered and maintained, and to fine tune the program policy details.

Ms. Cronin spoke and said that perhaps we should consider calling it a "Town Beautification Program" as an overall program worth pursuing, and added comments and suggestions. EDAC members present agreed that it was a good project to work on and others offered ideas and suggestions. It was agreed that PBA, the Garden Club, DPW and Invasive Plant Committee should be involved in this project. Paula Terrassi mentioned areas that fall under MassDOT jurisdiction that need to be considered. She agreed to work with the appropriate parties/Town Departments to ensure that the list meets various requirements.

Deb Fountain spoke on behalf of the Invasive Plant Committee and gave a brief overview of plants that should/should not be included. She provided feedback based on the memo she prepared and sent to EDAC regarding numerous recommended Do's/Don'ts.

EDAC members agreed that conformity of signs is important and that the Town should pay for that. Project could be advertised on social media, local newspapers, and other forms of media exposure as an incentive for participation by local landscapers, businesses, etc.

Process could be first come first serve. Intent is to make the process straight forward and easy to maintain. Chair stated that the next steps would be to draft a policy statement for the Adopt an Island/Spot program, would vet it out amongst the various Town departments, then submit to Town Administrator to include on an upcoming SB meeting for approval. Chair thanked guests for their interest, input, ideas and suggestions. Chair asked if there were any more items for discussion. There were none.

Chair then moved on to the next agenda item: Wayfinding. Ms. Cronin clarified that the initial Wayfinding initiative was not spearheaded by the Historical Commission (HC). She wanted to clarify that this project was an earmark that came from Senator Ed Kennedy under the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, and that the program announcement came to the Town Administrator's office. Ms. Cronin stated that she volunteered to start to work on the project, not under the auspices of the HC but as a private citizen interested in doing it. The HC was aware of what was going on, however, there were no discussions at meetings; there were no votes taken, nor did any recommendations come from the HC. The entire initiative came from the Town Administrator's office. The TA made all final decisions. Ms. Cronin went on to say that she wanted people to understand how this came about. She continued to say that at the time she understood that her work was mainly Phase I part of the program, and that her focus was to get a few signs done.

The reason she decided to spend so much time on it was that Covid happened, her shop was closed, she had the time but, more importantly, the timing for Wayfinding funds was about to expire. If no action was taken the Town would have lost over \$17K in Wayfinding funding. Ms. Cronin outlined the program process and action items. She worked with other Town department personnel in making decisions and that none of the decisions made were her own. Work was done "under the gun", there were problems with resources, but the earmark funds were not taken away. Some of the work proceeded as best as it could under the circumstances, and what was done met the necessary criteria to keep the funds in Pepperell. She detailed the current status of existing signs.

Ms. Cronin believes that Wayfinding program is more of a marketing, economic development opportunity and that is why she decided to approach EDAC. Half of these kiosks are blank, so an opportunity exists to promote anything the Town believes to be its assets and destinations of interest. Ms. Cronin shared a list of ecotourism opportunities she put together to help market natural resources and businesses in Pepperell. She went on to provide additional ideas for information and content for the kiosks. She stated that she has met with many of the town committees and organizations to help promote interest in using the kiosks to promote business. Many are interested and want to contribute. Phase I Wayfinding is done, Phase II on now needs to be taken over by a central/appropriate department or group to continue the work and use the signs appropriately.

Ms. Cronin identified the existing problem of having no one entity in charge of the storage key and/or location of the remaining blank signs/accessories. No one seems to know where anything is. Her message was clear in that this is a very important piece of work for the Town, and a management process needs to be put into a central place to manage. In her opinion, the economic development piece is the most important area that needs

attention. Ms. Cronin believes that a central Town department needs to be put in charge of ensuring a solid wayfinding program be carried out in Pepperell long term, and that it's maintained for years to come.

Town Planner stated that she would be happy to help move this along. She and Ms. Cronin agreed to meet and coordinate the status of Phase II wayfinding. Ms. Gringas mentioned that she was working on submitting a number of grants which ask about efforts made regarding economic development programs/initiatives. She reminded the group that there were MPIT funds available for any group working on implementation projects requiring funding for something which might be associated with the MP Recommendations. There are forms available for this purpose. Requests for under \$1K go to Town Planner; requests for over \$1K go to the Planning Board for approval.

Chair thanked Ms. Cronin for her valuable information and suggestions. He then asked members for any project updates. Mr. Walkovich talked briefly about the status of MPIT and referred to the mentioning of it at the May Town Meeting. He talked about the AROD Bylaw getting passed as a significant step forward in realizing much of the Master Plan Recommendations, together with other initiatives for the downtown area which are underway. He mentioned that MPIT will be undergoing a re-organization given his SB election and other MPIT team members involved in other initiatives. The PB is considering how best to reorganize the group going forward now that much of the initial framework has been done. So the next phase of implementation is on the radar. Chair thanked Mr. Walkovich for his hard work and dedication on the Master Plan Committee and MPIT team.

Ms. Cronin suggested putting together a list of opportunities for residents/people to get involved. We need to do a better job of communicating out what needs to be done with details. We need someone who will do a better job of maintaining a website which identifies what needs to be done and ask for volunteers. She believes that the timing is critical right now to determine what residents believe as important for the Town now. Ms. Cronin referred to a survey she helped create when she was on EDAC several years back. The EDAC survey was sent out with the census and could be returned with the completed census form. Completion/participation was huge – over 1200 residents responded. It was done through Survey Monkey (about \$500); she explained how the survey was put together. Over 125 respondents volunteered to help the Town, but she never received back any details on who responded and where the info ended up. Ms. Terrassi said that she had the link to the survey results and that she would send it to EDAC Clerk to distribute appropriately.

3. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was received and approved at 7:24PM

4. 2022 EDAC Meeting Schedule

June 16

July 21

August 18

September 15

October 20

November 17

December 15