



Town of Walpole
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Community & Economic Development

JAMES A. JOHNSON
Town Administrator

Patrick Deschenes
*Community & Economic
Development Director*

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REMOTE MEETING
10/24/23

Members in Attendance: Marc Romeo (Chair), Beth Pelick (Vice Chair), Brian Connor, Kevin Spendley, John Shalbey, Harry Brousaides (Liaison/Non-voting Member), Patrick Deschenes (Community and Economic Development)

Members Absent: Donnell Murphy

Meeting called to order at 6:05 PM.

Minutes

Motion by Mr. Shalbey to approve the minutes from August 15, 2023, seconded by Mr. Spendley.
Motion carried 5-0-0 (Romeo –aye; Shalbey – aye; Pelick – aye; Spendley – aye; Connors – aye).

Spring Business Forum

- **Location, date, agenda**
- **How to expand on last year's forum**
- **Partnership with Change of Commerce and Destination Downtown**

Mr. Deschenes hoped to have a fall business forum however time did not allow for it. He wanted to put together a spring forum since the last one went well. A subcommittee would be needed and there was an opportunity to have different kinds of speakers than there were at the last forum.

Mr. Romeo agreed that the spring would be a good time for the event. The rest of the committee agreed.

Mr. Romeo said that staff should work to get a date confirmed with the venue, likely the Walpole Country Club, and send out save the dates even if it seemed a bit early.

Mr. Brousaides suggested March 7, 2024. Mr. Romeo asked to confirm that there would not be any conflict the Friends of St. Patrick's event hosted by Mr. Donnell. It was noted his even lands on the Friday before St. Patrick's Day. Mr. Romeo noted at the last event there were only two EDC members in attendance and he encouraged there to be more of a presence. Mr. Brousaides agreed and added that the EDC members should also speak.

Mr. Deschenes offered to touch base with the Building Commissioner and Jim Johnson.

Mr. Brousaides asked if there was any feedback received from the last event. Mr. Deschenes said there was not much feedback, however he would revise the method of collecting that information in the future.

Mr. Shalbey and Mr. Spendley volunteered to be on the committee.

Mr. Deschenes said he would reach out to the Walpole Country Club to see if there is availability for March 7, 2023

MBTA Zoning Update

- **Status Update**
- **Evaluating impact on commercial development within downtown**

Mr. Deschenes explained he wanted to update the EDC on this process. Later that evening, the Select Board was scheduled to appoint the steering committee for this initiative. He planned to have a stakeholder meeting which he wanted the EDC to be a part of and this would hopefully be ready to present at Spring Town Meeting.

Mr. Spendley asked when the deadline for this zoning change was and Mr. Deschenes confirmed it would be 12/31/24.

Evaluating current Commercial and Industrial Zoning Districts

- **Review existing boundaries for their practicality in today's environment**
- **Consideration of recommended action item within draft master plan**

Mr. Deschenes explained that while the draft master plan was still before the Planning Board, he wanted to begin discussing some of its goals with the EDC. Specifically, he wanted to discuss a few zones and find opportunities to improve or reconfigure zones in a way that made better sense. The Industrial and Limited Manufacturing zones were typically made based on the historic use of the property. This caused situations around Town where one parcel would be zoning something different than the surrounding area. Mr. Deschenes explained options to help there be a more cohesive zoning layout by hiring a consultant or a zoning recodification. Research and Development, for example, was missing from the uses and not clearly defined. This would be an area that a zoning recodification or consultant could help clearly define the use and area.

Mr. Shalbey asked to clarify if there would be new zones created or an updated to uses. Mr. Deschenes said an overlay district was an option and felt there should be outside assistance.

Mr. Spendley agreed to have a consultant and brought up the Cedar Junction property. Mr. Deschenes said it was hard to say what would happen to that property. He added that he received grant funding for a zoning recodification and explained the process.

General Discussion on Agenda Topics:

Regarding the MBTA Zoning, Mr. Romeo asked if the changes would be compared to the master plan.

Mr. Deschenes said the Master Plan recommendation would be factored into a potential compliant MBTA district. He further explained the MBTA Zoning is for the allowance of multi-family units by right.

Mr. Shalbey noted there could be bonus density allowed to incentivize mixed use. Mr. Deschenes added there could be provisions for mixed use by right and added that Town's did not want to lose their downtown feel.

Mr. Deschenes went over the public outreach opportunities and reminded the committee that the underlying zoning was always an option. The Town can add on their own provisions or limits like open space requirements or a maximum number of stories.

Mr. Romeo asked if there was an affordable component. Mr. Deschenes said it was optional and he would recommend it so the Town could maintain its safe harbor status. He explained that a feasibility study would be required for affordable over 10% which he did not recommend.

Mr. Romeo asked if there was a difference between rental and ownership units. Mr. Deschenes said the Town could not dictate the kinds of units.

Regarding Cedar Junction, Mr. Romeo asked if the land would go back to the Town now that the facility had closed. Mr. Deschenes said he would look into that and confirm.

Mr. Connor said that the Town was given \$700,000 a year by the state which covered Police and Fire costs. Mr. Spendley said that money would be lost likely after the next fiscal year.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Spendley to adjourn at 5:53 PM, seconded by Mr. Connor. Motion carried 5-0 (Romeo – aye; Shalbey – aye; Pelick – aye; Spendley – aye; Connors – aye).