



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
2/20/24

Members in Attendance: Marc Romeo (Chair), Brian Connor, Kevin Spendley, Briana Pinheiro, Patrick Deschenes (Community and Economic Development)

Members Absent: Beth Pelick, Donnell Murphy, John Shalbey, Harry Brousaides

Meeting called to order at 5:05 PM by Mr. Romeo.

EDC Member Appointment

Ms. Pinheiro introduced herself to the Board. Mr. Romeo thanked her for her interest in the commission.

MAPC-Technical Assistance Program

Mr. Deschenes explained that several months ago he mentioned the possibility of reviewing Commercial and Industrial zones to be in line with the Master Plan. Since then he was connected with the Technical Assistance Program through MAPC which will help determine the highest and best use of land from a historic and equity standpoint. He noted that Route 1 should be where Industrial and Commercial uses are allowed whereas many Industrial and commercially zoned parcels have become residential.

Mr. Romeo asked to clarify the “equitable” language. He asked if that meant Industrial and Commercial uses would be reallocated, equitably, in areas of Town that are strictly residential. Mr. Deschenes clarified that equity was only an element to this and the project was optimize land use within the Town. This would not mean that Commercial and Industrial uses were to be spread out evenly in the Town.

Mr. Deschenes explained that the application was almost finished and discussed different funding opportunities for this initiative.

Zoning Audit and Recodification

Mr. Deschenes explained he received funding to complete a Zoning Recodification which would remove any inconsistencies within the current zoning as well as modernize the bylaw as a whole.

Mr. Romeo agreed that there was a lot of inconsistencies. He asked if this would be done in house. Mr. Deschenes said the legal team would likely be Town Counsel.

Mr. Deschenes noted the MAPC-TAP project would take roughly 6-12 months to complete and the Zoning Recodification would be done in a phased approach until the funds were gone. He noted this would go through the standard process for Town Meeting.

MBTA Zoning Overlay District

Mr. Deschenes said this would need to go to the Planning Board and a Steering Committee had met several times. The Committee will host a public forum soon and they tried to mitigate density by using a tiered, sub district approach. The two proposed zones (central and outer cores) would have two different density limits.

Mr. Deschenes explained that this was a theoretical build out and existing units were not applied to the model. There were guidelines for the buildout. Mixed use would be allowed, however multifamily needed to be allowed as of right. The underlying zoning would remain in effect and site plan review would be required for projects.

Mr. Spendley asked if non-mixed use was allowed. Mr. Deschenes said mixed use could not be restricted, however mixed use could be incentivized in certain areas. As there was lot of existing commercial space left vacant, the steering committee suggested incentivizing mixed use along Route 1A.

Mr. Romeo asked how other communities were in the process and wondered if 40B projects were possible in this area. Mr. Deschenes explained that this was a different concept. A 40B project could be anywhere and explained the affordable component. Anything over 10% affordable in this zone would require an economic feasibility study. By having an affordable component, it would help to keep the Town's SHI in good standings as the number of market rate units rise.

Ms. Pinheiro asked how much of the proposed zoning was mandated by the State vs. what the Town wanted for the zone. Mr. Deschenes explained the guidelines as well as the consequences of non-compliance.

Mr. Romeo asked if Towns could opt out. Mr. Deschenes said that could not be done without facing issues of noncompliance. The State had not made a determination for the situation in Milton yet.

Ms. Pinheiro asked if the Planning Board would need to approve the bylaw. Mr. Deschenes said they would only need to hold a public hearing and it would be up to Town Meeting to pass the bylaw.

Mr. Romeo was concerned there would be more large scale projects such as the Gilmore's location within the downtown as a result of this zoning where the Planning and Zoning Board's would have no input as the projects would be allowed by right. Mr. Deschenes explained the Planning Board would still conduct Site Plan Review.

Mr. Romeo pointed out that some Towns near the Cape had lobbied for a commuter rail extension and these new regulations might change their mind. He asked if anything needed to be done around the area of Windsor Gardens. Mr. Deschenes explained the zoning did not need to be in every area where there was a commuter rail station, rather if just needed to meet the guidelines. He added that a public forum would be next and would like the EDC's partnership.

Spring Business Forum

The Spring Business Forum would be held on Thursday, March 28th from 7-9am at the Walpole Country Club. Mr. Deschenes confirmed the room was booked and the deposit was made.

Mr. Romero suggested speaking to Hometown Weekly Newspaper to see if they would run an article in the paper for the forum.

Mr. Deschenes said the final headcount would be taken a week before the event.

General Discussion

Mr. Romeo asked about the Cannabis bylaw in the Town. Mr. Deschenes said it would require a Town vote as it would be a zoning change. The Town was properly zoned for medical marijuana but voted against recreational.

Mr. Romeo said the shops generate so much revenue and the Town should reconsider. He felt that the Towns surrounding Walpole were making significant revenue and Walpole was missing out.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Spendley to adjourn at 6:03 PM, seconded by Mr. Connor. Motion carried 4-0-0 (Romeo – aye; Pinheiro – aye; Spendley – aye; Connors – aye).