



**Economic Development Commission
Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 5:00 PM
Room 112, Walpole Town Hall**

Meeting Minutes

Attending:

Chairman Marc Romeo, Donnell Murphy, Ken Fettig, John Hasenjaeger, Brian Connor, Harry Broussaires, Kevin Spendley, and Community Development Director, Ashley Clark

Absent:

Beth Pellick, Paul Staz

Chairman Romeo opened the hearing.

East Walpole Market

Mr. Eli Nakhoul, owner of the East Walpole Market, stated that he has collected many signatures from registered voters in support of a liquor license. He noted that there are around 350 signatures or more. He stated that he has been talking to customers, mostly from the neighborhood, and they like the idea of having a package store license nearby.

Mr. Nakhoul noted that previously, Edmonds was in the store for over 50 years and served beer and wine under a package store license. He stated that Edmond closed the shop and license was sold. Mr. Nakhoul stated that now he is trying to get the license back to east Walpole because we make it convenient for the neighborhood; people need to travel far.

There was a discussion with the Board on whether or not there are any package store licenses available. The board also discussed the limitations of a licenses that is granted as a site-specific license, noting that would it not be able to be transferred to another location, even if the current owner sells or moves.

Chair Romeo stated that five years ago, his opinion may have been different, but stated that Mr. Nakhoul has earned the right to be considered for this license. Chair Romeo stated the he wants to try to find a way to speed it up and find a way to not have to wait and then wait for the state's decision.

There was a discussion on whether it's possible to open the warrant and what support/opposition Mr. Nakhoul has encountered.

Mr. Murphy noted that Mr. Nakhoul has worked to get a lot of signatures for the warrant, as well as others that just generally show support.

Discussion over how to support a package store license. There was a discussion about the other businesses in town that hold package store licenses and that previously, the existing package stores fought the application.

Mr. Nakhoul stated that there are not many nearby his location.

Mr. Murphy cautioned Mr. Nakhoul that he will encounter some opposition as he moves forward and should be ready.

Chair Romeo stated that this area in east Walpole is ripe for a refresh and reinvigoration of this commercial area and felt that allowing this type of retail opportunity back in the neighborhood would be a good start. Mr. Murphy concurred and added that the additional license will enhance east Walpole and outweighs the concern about potential loss of other business.

Chair Romeo stated that the existing neighborhood is walkable to the market and he would be supportive of EDC working with Mr. Nakhoul to help obtain a package store license.

The Board requested that Ms. Clark with the BOS and with the ABC licensing and figure out how to get on to the warrant and if there is a mechanism to reopen to get this in that would be hugely helpful then we can move from there in terms of trying to get EDC to sponsor it.

Mr. Hasenjaeger stated that the downside of Mr. Nakhoul not getting a package store license is that his business would go under and there would be yet another boarded up store.

Mr. Connor made a motion to investigate how EDC can help the East Walpole Market obtain a beer and wine license and possibly reopen the warrant to get on to spring

Hasenjaeger, seconded – 6-0-0

Jackie Halfond, New Home Signature Realty

Ms. Halfond stated that she has been a Walpole resident for 20 years. She stated that she moved to Walpole and worked at various places was on Board of Directors Neponset Valley Chambers and worked for Panera Bread doing marketing. She stated she lost touch of what is going on in the community and recently started to work in realty. She stated that she wanted to see how to get involved the community; whether Main Street Live or Walpole Day and would be excited to participate whether a float or a booth so just wanted to throw it out there.

Discussion over community events and how to get involved.

Mr. Fettig inquired about new developments in town.

Brian Connor suggested following town meeting and it's a good way to get to know what is going on and having a role in what happens in town.

Discussion over Main Street Live and help that is needed to pull it off.

Discussion over event management and fundraising.

Discussion over Gilmore's site for sale and development opportunities and the need to maintain the commercial aspect to projects to balance residential. He stated that there is a need for commercial space downtown and a need to maintain the percentage and pressing upon the Planning Board to allow residential but also require commercial to support. Chair Romeo stated that we can't let them negotiate out the commercial aspect of it.

Chair Romeo stated that Walpole isn't in the same position we were in 2 ½ years ago when the town was reviewing other buildings. We're in a stronger position to that that as opposed to make concessions. Murphy and Mr. Brousaides concurred.

Mr. Brousaides stated that we've seen plans on social media so that tells that they're trying to get some type of approval.

There was a discussion about a 40B in that location does that eliminate the commercial the requirement. Ms. Clark stated that 40B projects can be mixed-use.

Discussion over 40B and what affordable means.

Mr. Brousaides stated that we should hold them to standard of retail space and have developers coming to town; and that affordable units should be in every development. Mr. Brousaides stated that he is a free market capitalist and conservative and we've avoided it for 10 years. We wouldn't have to have a 40B there.

Mr. Brousaides stated that there should be a moratorium until master plan is done and zoning bylaw fixed and a downtown plan and best use for downtown is mixed use.

Mr. Murphy stated that we should be proactive and contact zoning and planning board. We'd like to see and participate come in and do preliminary review and be a part of the preliminary review.

Main Street Live discussion – Mr. Murphy stated that there were issues last year with liquor licenses and being able to serve alcohol on the streets which lowered participation. He stated that the EDC is looking for help on what we can do to make that happen. We've been going for one

day liquor licenses year 3 or 4 red flags started to go up. We're learning what we need to do is an extension of premise and for the Selectmen to extend the premises from June until September.

The EDC discussed that Massachusetts towns have done amendments which allows restaurants to seasonally serve alcohol under their existing license on town property. This would allow it to be handled at the town level. Selectmen to make amendment to the by-law.

Discussion of business forum in October as an EDC event with a Businessperson of the Year Award. Mr. Murphy stated that he would sponsor the food. Ms. Clark stated that the Town Administrator was supportive, and she would get availability for October.

There was a discussion about the inclusionary zoning. Chair Romeo stated that inclusionary zoning bylaws in other towns are more targeted and overlays. He stated what Walpole is proposing is the most drastic hardest hitting inclusionary zoning bylaw that any town will have around us. He stated that it seems like the group is trying to make Walpole an example of progressive ideals and you can't do that on the back of developers. Chair Romeo stated that its wrong for private developers should not have to foot the bill for social programs. He stated he didn't think affordable housing was wrong. He stated he isn't against affordable housing, but he is against social gesturing to show how woke Walpole is. Chair Romeo stated that Walpole is forcing developers to either build that component or pay into the fund. He stated that if you're in some social group that is pushing hard for affordable housing all the power to you, we need that, those people think no one is allowed to make money. Chair Romeo stated that recapture is a nice word for a shakedown. He stated other places are fulfilling their affordable housing requirement that is equitable for everyone. He stated that is why he is against it.

Discussion over making developers foot the bill for social programs. There was a discussion about what is affordable, and Walpole is a town where market rate and affordable rate are close.

Mr. Fettig left announcing he was married 59 years ago.

Mr. Hasenjaeger stated that they want to go way over safe harbor. He stated that we're going to get people from Boston and Sri Lanka and from immigration states. He stated its not a local preference. He stated the criteria discriminates against the local. Mr. Hasenjaeger stated they're going to change the culture of the towns huge.

Chair Romeo stated there is very little empirical evidence that inclusionary zoning bylaws even work. He stated the evidence shows that it falls on the back of the landowners.

Mr. Brousaides stated that it should be a commonsense discussion of people moving out to the suburbs so they can find a place to afford. He asked why people don't just go to North Attleboro.

Chair Romeo stated the most successful inclusionary zoning bylaws include density bonuses that allow developers to provide more units and add market rate units to offset.

Mr. Connor stated that putting an affordable person in a million-dollar home does not make sense because the person is going to have to pay all the maintenance costs.

Discussion over getting thoughts together to put input for Select Board and Town Meeting.

Mr. Donnell stated this should be part of the master plan. Chair Romeo stated that at planning board they said this was the last major zoning change we were ever going to allow until the master plan was done.

Mr. Murphy moved to adjourn, Mr. Connor seconded.

5-0-0 to end the meeting.