

EDC Minutes: 4/13/21

Present: Marc Romeo, Kevin Spendley, Ken Fettig, Margaret Kundert, Daniel O'Driscoll, Harry Brousaides, Patrick Deschenes (Director of Community & Economic Development)

Romeo opened the meeting at 5:15 PM

Business:

- **Local Rapid Recovery Planning Grant**

- Overview of Project Status:

Philip Schaeffing of Santec was present and gave a presentation of an overview and objectives of the Grant. Due to the absence of audio during the presentation via Zoom, additional info on this program can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program>. Romeo and Kundert expressed that a large issue with downtown Walpole is the façade of the buildings, and recognized the need for more appealing store fronts, including restaurants to draw in patrons. Fettig expressed the idea of placing an article in the local newspaper to inform local businesses of the grant.

- Stakeholder Meetings

Deschenes stated that he will reach out to the other Commission members who were unavailable to attend today's meeting to get availability of everyone for the purpose of holding a stakeholder meeting in the near future.

- **Discussion of Main Street Live:**

This discussion will be tabled to the next meeting due to the absence of key members.

- **Department Updates:**

Patrick Deschenes touched upon the following topics:

Provided the Commission with a Master Plan update, and explained that the Town has made the decision to use the Barrett Planning Group as a consultant, and are currently in the process of working on the composition of the original Master Plan Committee that will have to go before the Select Board as to what that make-up will be, and is hoping to have the first kick-off meeting by May 11, 2021. Deschenes stated that one of the recommendations that he and Patrick Shield had is to have at least one member of the EDC being involved, and to ultimately have a (9) person committee consisting of representatives from multiple existing boards.

Stated that the town has received Housing Choice Designation, which he explained is a newer program through the DHCD that identified communities that have seen substantial housing growth within 5 yrs., in which Walpole has had approx. 700 units within 5 yrs. which exceeds the requirements of the Housing Choice Designation. Deschenes explained that for the next 2 yrs. the town of Walpole is locked in with being eligible to apply for certain Capital Grants that include improvements to infrastructure relating to different housing projects. Deschenes stated that he'd like to reach out to DPW relating to ideas of what improvements could be implemented within the town infrastructure wise.

Touched upon the state's attempt at streamlining the process for towns relating to applying for grants by allowing towns to apply for grants with a specific project in mind, versus just generally applying for the grant. Deschenes expressed that there is a deadline of June 4, 2021 and would ideally like to apply within the next few weeks.

Touched upon outdoor dining, which opened up 4/1/21 in terms of allowing for outdoor dining, and expressed that seeing outside patrons is extremely beneficial for the appeal of downtown and bringing in more foot traffic.

The first subcommittee meeting for Main Street Live was held, followed by a meeting with department heads, which was beneficial. Deschenes voiced that it'll be important to keep in mind where the state is at relating to the gathering guidelines for the month of September.

Deschenes has been in communication with the group that ran the Juneteenth event last year on a small scale, And this year is hoping to have a larger scale event and utilize both ends of the common. Deschenes stated that the group still needs to meet with the Select Board to seek approval to utilize public space and to also find a way to successfully hold an outdoor event with gathering regulations in place.

Shares Streets & Spaces was a grant that was utilized this year by Walpole to purchase outdoor materials to try and encourage outdoor use of spaces, Deschenes mentioned that there is still funding to use, and that he would like to use the remaining funds for outdoor seating or any recommendations that he will receive from the local Rapid Recovery Planning Grant.

Deschenes also stated that he has recently done an update on the 40B projects that are within the town.

Open Forum: Romeo introduced the newest member of the Commission, Dan O'Driscoll. O'Driscoll gave a brief introduction relating to how he would like to make an impact. Romeo also stated that the EDC currently has 4 associate member vacancies and is open to anyone that is interested in participating on the Commission.

Minutes: 3/9/21: due to a lack of quorum, minutes were tabled to the next meeting.

Fettig motioned to adjourn, seconded by Spendley, the motion carried 5-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:18 PM.

Accepted 5/11/21