



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
5/11/21

Present: Kevin Spendley, Ken Fettig, Meg Kundert, Daniel O’Driscoll, John Shalbey, Donnell Murphy, Beth Pelick, Brian Connor (entered zoom at 5:24 PM), Patrick Deschenes (Director of Community & Economic Development)

Absent: Marc Romeo

Ms. Pelick opened the meeting, and addressed the following topics below;

BUSINESS:

Discussion on potential change to meeting date/time

Mr. Shalbey stated that he has bimonthly meetings on Tuesday nights 3:30-7PM, and would be willing to keep the meeting start time of 5:00 P.M. and possibly change the meeting day to another day besides Tuesdays, or even a different Tuesday within the month. Other members of the Commission expressed their support of keeping the start time in place.

MOTION to meet on the third Tuesday of the month by Mr. Spendley, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the motion carried 7-0-0 (Fettig, Pelick, Shalbey, Kundert, Murphy, O’Driscoll, Spendley).

5:24 PM Brian Connor entered Zoom

EDC support for grant proposal

- One Stop for Community Growth - Old Town Hall: Comprehensive Study of reuse potential and work needed to make bldg. viable for future tenant/operator

Mr. Deschenes explained to the Commission that for a few years now, the Town has been looking to sell or lease out the old Town Hall. Mr. Deschenes stated that there was a study done to look into the reuse potential of the building, however, additional work is needed for the architectural assessment, as well as a further look into the price that is needed to make the building viable for a potential buyer. Mr. Deschenes explained that the memo provided to the Commissioners from Patrick Shield explains how the state has consolidated a few different grant platforms into a one stop portal, which allows towns to apply for multiple grants. Mr. Deschenes went on to state that there are a few grants at the moment that may fit the criteria.

Mrs. Kundert asked what potential uses could be for the building, in which Mr. Deschenes stated that it could be possibly used as a brewery or restaurant, or something of that nature for a commercial use.

Mrs. Pelick brought up the issue of the lack of parking surrounding the property.

Mr. Murphy brought up the issue of the difficulty the potential business owners would have relating to truck deliveries.

Mr. Fetting expressed his concern over handicap and delivery access to the building as well.

Mr. Deschenes expressed that if we don't get the grant than other options will need to be looked into, however, keeping that building as a landmark and as a cornerstone for that location is ideal.

MOTION to instruct Mr. Deschenes to produce a letter stating that the EDC is in support of the Old Town Hall re-use comprehensive study by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Spendley, the vote carried 8-0-0 (Fetting, Pelick, Shalbey, Kundert, Murphy, Connor, Spendley, O'Driscoll in favor).

Mr. Shalbey stated that he has been looking at property downtown personally to invest and build on so as part of his ethical obligation, he is stating that into the record.

Local Rapid Recovery Planning Grant

Mr. Deschenes stated that there was an initial survey for downtown businesses and that there has been stakeholder meetings with both municipal and as well as local affiliated parties to try to get some input on their views on the downtown setup and issues of concern, flaws, points of interest, and positive and negative qualities.

Mr. Deschenes stated that the next phase of this process is to have an outreach session where our plant facilitator Phil Schaffing and some of his colleagues at the consulting firm Stantec can go over their findings as well as start to address some potential measures that they've been able to identify unique to the Town of Walpole, which currently has a date of 5/26/21 and may be moved to 5/27/21. Mr. Deschenes stated that the exact date and time will be posted and provided as soon as it is finalized.

Master Plan Committee- EDC Representative

Mr. Deschenes explained that Barrett Consulting Group has been hired to work with the town on the implementation of the Master Plan update, and so far they have been working to determine a first kick-off meeting, as well as go over what the potential makeup and structure of the Master Plan Implementation committee will be.

Mr. Deschenes emphasized that having an EDC member on the Committee is a vital component of the process, and would ideally like to have the first kick-off meeting of the Committee by 5/25/21 at 5:00 P.M. in order to plan the first outreach session with the town before summer, with the goal of getting something in before the last week of June.

Mr. Murphy asked when the committee would be potentially meeting, in which Mr. Deschenes stated that the 2nd and 4th Tues. of the month would be an option.

Mr. Murphy asked what the expectations of the committee members was going to be as far as just meeting attendance or outside responsibilities, in which Mr. Deschene stated that there will be some outside responsibilities/ initial incentives to help publicize the public outreach.

Mr. Murphy asked about how many years the committee will be in place, in which Mr. Deschenes replied that it would be conservatively a year, and he is hoping to have a project to be reviewed and adopted by the Planning Board by May of 2022.

Mrs. Kundert expressed her interest to be on the committee and volunteered herself.

Discussion of Main Street Live

Mr. Murphy stated that he met with the town and explained that with the recent update by Gov. Baker with the relaxing of the COVID restrictions, it appears that Main Street Live will be viable for the 3rd week in September. Mr. Murphy stated that they have started moving forward with the department heads and everybody seems to be on board, including the Board of Health. Mr. Murphy stated that he's already secured the tents, tables and linens, and explained that Mr. Romeo is going to reach out and secure the entertainment for the event.

Mr. Murphy stated that the only obstacle that would make the event unviable would be the need for social distancing, otherwise he foresees no issues relating to masks, etc. Mr. Murphy stated he is seeking volunteers to be responsible for the bars, in which Mrs. Pelick volunteered to be responsible for one of them.

Mr. Murphy expressed the need for a people to take on the ticket-booth and wristbands, in which Connor and Spendley volunteered to do so. Going forward, the next steps explained by Mr. Murphy are to have Mr. Deschenes meet with the necessary people regarding the food trucks for the event, and an email will be sent out stating the date and time of when the committee will meet next.

Department Updates

Mr. Deschenes stated that the Master Plan as previously mentioned is a large focus point. Mr. Deschenes also stated that regarding the Housing Choice Designation, the town was able to meet the thresholds for designation status based upon the increase in housing within the town over the last five years, and explained that receiving the Designation opens the town up to apply for capital infrastructure grants that will remain for the next two fiscal years. Mr. Deschenes stated that he is currently working on a housing choice capital grant dealing with sidewalk and street improvements in relation to Union Street from the point the sidewalk stops on Union and extending to Route 1. Mr. Deschenes mentioned that there will be a second annual Juneteenth event on the Common, and that Destination Downtown is looking into doing some type of art event on the Common as well over the Summer. Lastly, the Shared Streets grant money that was awarded to the Town previously by Ashley Clark had remaining funds, and those funds have been used to purchase additional outdoor seating options within the downtown.

OPEN FORUM:

Minutes

MOTION to accept minutes from 3/9/21 as written by Mr. Spendley, seconded by Spendley, the motion carried 7-0-1 (Murphy, Spendley, Kundert, Shalbey, Connor, O'Driscoll, Fettig in favor; Pelick abstained)

MOTION to accept minutes from 4/13/21 as written by Ms. Spendley, seconded by Mr. Fettig, the motion carried 4-0-4 (Kundert, Spendley, Fettig, O'Driscoll in favor; Murphy, Shalbey, Connor, Pelick abstained)

Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Shalbey, the vote carried 8-0-0 (Pelick, Fettig, Shalbey, Kundert, Murphy, O'Driscoll, Connor, Spendley in favor)

The meeting adjourned at 5:54 PM

Respectfully Submitted: Amy Messier, Administrative Assistant