



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
5/17/22

Present: Donnell Murphy, John Shalbey, Brian Connor, Kevin Spendley

Absent: Marc Romeo (Chair), Beth Pelick (Vice Chair)

Also present: Patrick Deschenes (Director of Community & Economic Development) and Harry Brousaides (Walpole Chamber Liaison)

Mr. Murphy opened the meeting at 5:00 P.M. and facilitated discussion due to the absence of Mr. Romeo and Ms. Pelick. Due to a lack of quorum no official votes could be taken.

BUSINESS:

Main Street Live

Mr. Murphy provided an overview of last year's event and concerns to focus on for this year.

Mr. Shalbey asked about the timing of food trucks and when they typically leave. Mr. Murphy stated they usually stay until they are out of food or until at least 9:00 P.M.

Mr. Murphy stated that Mr. Connor and Mr. Spendley would be working on increased sponsorship opportunities. Mr. Conner stated that finding a standard manageable sponsorship amount from local businesses would be key.

Mr. Conner questioned what the additional benefit would be for sponsors. Mr. Murphy stated that in the past they had done banners, signs, and event tents/booth naming. Mr. Murphy also stated that in the past yard signs have been utilized to highlight sponsors.

Mr. Murphy, Mr. Shalbey, and My. Brousaides discussed additional food vendors and vendor booths.

Mr. Murphy addressed setting up another Main Street Live subcommittee meeting for the Thursday, May 26, 2022 at 11:00 A.M.

Mr. Deschenes addressed setting up a municipal department meeting. Mr. Murphy asked to look into the first week in June. Mr. Deschenes stated that he would get back to the group with a date and time after 11:00 A.M. for the department review meeting.

Mr. Shalbey addressed food vendors though had already confirmed they would be available for the event. Mr. Murphy asked Mr. Deschenes to look into an information packet for food vendors, in particular permitting with the Heath Department.

Zoning Bylaws: Potential Amendments to Facilitate Economic Growth

Mr. Deschenes stated that the Building Commissioner and himself had been looking into zoning bylaw amendments and wanted to address with the EDC potential amendments to the table of use regulations and dimensional regulations as it related to facilitating new growth within the Highway Business district.

Mr. Shalbey stated that the front setback requirement within the Highway Business District was exceedingly high. Mr. Donnell stated that the setback with parking also prevented an issue with wasted space.

Mr. Spendley stated that the height requirement within the Highway Business district had been brought up before. Mr. Shalbey stated that over 50 feet with five (5) stories would be an improvement from current regulations. The Commission discussed this issue as it related to potential hotels.

Mr. Deschenes also stated that he was looking into reducing residential parking requirements within the Central Business District which at this moment he felt were excessive given the location. Mr. Murphy concurred with this rationale.

Mr. Murphy asked when Mr. Deschenes was looking for comments by. Mr. Deschenes stated that by mid-July would be preferable to comply with the warrant deadlines.

Mr. Deschenes also asked the Commission about stances on cultivation sites due to regional discussions on the topic.

Mr. Shalbey brought up making drive-thru services by-right if certain components were met rather than requiring a Special Permit.

Department Updates

ARPA Funds

Mr. Deschenes addressed his department's ARPA funding proposals which included a municipal run grant program to assist small businesses hurt by COVID as well as the ongoing Route 1A construction. Mr. Deschenes stated that he felt getting funding back to small businesses would be a beneficial use of funds.

Mr. Murphy felt it would be beneficial to provide funding to all areas of Town. Mr. Deschenes stated that the Town would be able to create/regulate a program in-house.

Mr. Spendley stated setting limits such as business size was a good idea. Mr. Shalbey stated that limiting gross receipts would not be the best threshold and that limiting the grant to businesses that had not already applied for PPP loans would prevent too many businesses. Mr. Deschenes stated that he could remove that requirement.

Mr. Brousaides stated that we should focus the grant on businesses impacted by the Route 1A construction.

FORWARD ACT

Mr. Deschenes addressed the potential FORWARD Act being pushed in the State. Mr. Deschenes stated that if passed funding could be made available directly for improvements to downtowns and town centers. Currently the bill was with the State House or Representatives.

Ongoing Development

Mr. Deschenes stated that mixed-use developments at 173 High Plain Street and at the East Walpole Clock Tower site were still ongoing. Mr. Deschenes also stated that the Route 1 Dunkin Donuts site was applying to modify their existing drive-thru. Mr. Deschenes stated that the new owners of 295 Union Street were also in the process of updating their site.

Mr. Brousaides asked about the ongoing ice cream store and bagel store in the downtown. Mr. Deschenes stated that those projects were still ongoing but he would need to check in with the Building Department on their status.

Master Plan

Mr. Deschenes stated that the second public forum had just recently passed and that the consultant was working on publishing a second follow up public survey.

ADJOURNMENT:

Due to not having a quorum the Commission adjourned the meeting without a formal motion.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 P.M.