

Economic Development Committee

21 Sep 2023 – Meeting Minutes

Time: 12:00pm – 1:04pm

Attendees:

Glenn Brown
John Drohan
Alex Ferro
Chinmaya Gogineni
Patrick Hafford
Viktoria Anshu
David Thorn

Also in attendance

Tina Hein – Select Board liaison

Travis Ahearn – Town Administrator

Discussion

Meeting opened with John Drohan calling meeting to order and reading the state required Zoom meeting disclosure. Confirmed next meeting was 19 October @1200 via zoom

First discussion was on conducting meetings in person in the future as the group collectively recognized the benefit of meeting in person vs. zoom. The convenience of zoom was also brought up as it enabled the members of the board to more easily attend, particularly if meetings were scheduled at midday. The idea came up of possibly alternating zoom and in person meetings and it was agreed that members would need to have substantial advanced notice in order to accomplish this. The group looked to possibly try this beginning in the new year.

Next discussion was an update on the status of the new EDC Coordinator position that the town is in the process of filling. Board member Pat Hafford provided background on the hiring and interview process however could not disclose who the candidates were or if a final decision had been made as the town was still in the process of conducting their due diligence information gathering on the potential hires. Pat told us that there were 4 candidates who all had a minimum of 45 minute interviews. He applauded the process and felt confident that they would select the right person for the job.

Next discussion was a quick update on the business round table discussion held by Representative James Arena DeRosa that occurred in August where attending business owners provided him feedback on areas of concern. John Drohan and Chinmaya Gogineni were in attendance.

Next was a review of the business outreach plan which was still in the planning phase as John Drohan was in the process of doing a visual census of the brick and mortar businesses in the town of Holliston. He indicated that the inventory was nearly complete and would provide the board members their respective lists that they will be overseeing based on the geographic breakdown of the town's business areas. The following is the task organization:

Lowland Street Industrial: John Drohan
East Holliston; Chinmaya Gogneni
October Hill Industrial: Alex Ferro
Downtown Business: David Thorn
Hoppingbrook Park: Glenn Brown
West Holliston: Viktoria Sadlovska Anshu
Farms and Outliers: Glenn Brown / John Drohan

We discussed that there will be a script that would be part of the packet that would be used as a guideline for when businesses were approached. We all agreed that this would be done with coordination with the new hire so as to bring that person up to speed on the plan and to make sure that there wasn't redundancy in effort. We also discussed the possibility that businesses may not be receptive to the outreach. We all reemphasized that the purpose of this effort was to simply connect with the businesses to let them know that the Economic Development Committee and the Town were taking positive steps to create a better information system and synergy between the town and the business community. The second part of the message was to let the businesses know that the town had hired an EDC Coordinator on a paid basis to grow this connection and provide a point of contact on the Town staff that businesses can connect with.

We also discussed the importance of updating the EDC website and business directory as part of the outreach program.

Next discussion was Glenn Brown providing a Future Holliston Committee update on what was happening. He stated that there was a call to action based on the 7 pillars of economic development that the study had identified. He identified that the EDC has specific areas that it can affect as part of the overall plan. He discussed that the actual monetary value of the business community with respect to revenue for the town was identified as the industrial parks and emphasized that this should continue to be an area of emphasis as we move forward with the new coordinator. The board agreed that we needed to identify what the priorities of effort of the EDC would be in support of the overall strategic plan (industrial park mentioned above). Viktoria agreed that everyone agreed on the strategic priorities but it would be up to us to distinguish passion vs. priority as to where our efforts should be targeted or massed. Glenn also stated that the EDC could also help by assisting in organizing numbers or data that supported prioritizing efforts based on cost benefit.

Next discussion was a mention of the 799 Washington street where John stated that he was going to coordinate with Travis on connecting back with Mr. Mitri in an effort to get him to move forward on making a decision on his property.

We mentioned that the 555 Hopping Brook decision was still in deliberation of the planning board and there was no update on that.

We discussed the downtown sewer project was still ongoing and Travis had indicated that a portion of that could be influenced by the state mandate that of 10% of housing be affordable housing.

Meeting adjourned at 1:04pm