

Economic Development Committee

16 March 2023 – Meeting Minutes

Time: 12:00pm – 1:05pm

Attendees:

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

Not available:
Christine Carosella

Also in attendance and participating:
Tina Hein – Select Board
Dan Alfred – Finance Committee
Mary Greendale – Board of Assessors

Discussion

Meeting opened with John Drohan calling meeting to order and reading the state required Zoom meeting disclosure. Next was the motion to approve the minutes from the 2 March 23 meeting. Motion passed.

The primary discussion was a continuation from our previous meeting of the Economic Development Committee (EDC) discussion of proposal by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Specifically the MAPC proposed that the town create a paid position that is responsible for overseeing the economic development strategy of the town. The goal for today's meeting was for the committee to discuss and create a proposal / recommendation for the new hire's timeline and workplan, clear objectives and tasks (as outlined in the workplan), identifying both short term and long term return on investment and lastly the administrative positioning of the new hire.

John Drohan asked the question of how the position would fit into the existing town government and what the person's direct chain of command would be. Glenn Brown suggested that the position would be part of the Town Administrator's organizational chart and would be supported by the EDC. The EDC would also be part of the evaluation process of the position. David Thorn agreed with Glenn on this point as did the rest of the committee.

John Drohan asked the committee to work to clearly identify the specified tasks that would result in a job description of what the committee expected the person in the position to be able

to do. The MAPC recommendation has a list of suggested tasks. Our goal was to streamline and prioritize tasks into a list of 5.

The group discussed different things that they wanted the new position to be able to do. The following is a general list of what people identified as important:

- The overriding responsibility of the position is to be the caretaker and manager of the Town's Economic Development Strategy that we are developing with the input of the Envisioning Future Holliston Committee, The Select Board, The Finance Committee, The Board of Assessors, The Planning Board, The Zoning Board and the Town Administrator's office.
- The position needs to be the overall manager of the communication between the town and the business community. This includes maintaining and updating the EDC website and social media as a primary source for business related information.
- Position needs to have the ability to work with all elements of Town Government and be able to liaison between groups and entities in order to always be driving the Economic Development Strategy.
- The position needs to not only be able to execute the specified tasks in the strategic plan but also needs to have visionary and creative capabilities to identify undiscovered strategies or actions to be able to achieve the overall strategic purpose.
- The position needs to be able to develop, orchestrate and execute a "recruiting and retention" plan that supports the overall strategy. The plan focuses on identifying and connecting with potential business fits in Holliston as well as developing and maintaining a strong relationship with businesses in an effort to keep them in Holliston.
- The position needs to be educated in any grant opportunities and state-tax relief programs that would enable a business to be able to move to Holliston.

We also discussed return on investment (ROI) and possibilities of how to quantify both in the short term as well as the longer term.

Some ideas that were discussed as far as short term ROI were things such as having the ability to identify what businesses were actually in Holliston (a census) and with that information have a more accurate personal property tax which could lead to revenue increase. Another short term ROI would be if there were any new tenants that were identified and moved into any of the industrial park.

The real discussion came from the strategic ROI that the position could bring. We discussed that if an accurate census was taken as well as information gathered of what drove businesses to Holliston and what businesses liked about Holliston, a recruiting and retention strategy could be better developed to set Holliston on an economic growth plan which could potentially change the existing ratio of residential v. commercial tax revenue. We discussed possibly setting goals over a time period (year 1, year 2, year 3) and agreed that if the town moved in a positive direction on changing this ratio, that number could be operationalized as ROI.

Lastly we discussed whether the position would be filled by a consultant role or a town employee role. This discussion had begun in the previous meeting. The committee unanimously agreed that the position would be best suited by a full time employee. Dan Alfred from the Finance Committee made a point about possibly hiring a consultant the first year to get the program off the ground and then full time in the second year. Concerns were also expressed about whether the Town would be able to find someone who was qualified to fill the role if the budgeted salary was between \$50 and \$60K. Another idea came up that perhaps we could hire the person for part of the year with the idea being to determine if this is going to work for the town and then addressing what a year long salary might look like and if all parties felt it was worth it.

We agreed that our vision of the position would be a lot of leg work early on and that it would not fit cleanly with a consulting role.

John stated that he would consolidate the comments and create a proposal / recommendation to go to the Town Administrator as well as the Select Board and the Finance Committee for review and to be converted into a job description.

Meeting adjourned at 1:08pm