

Feb 16, 2023, 7:00 p.m. EDC Meeting Minutes - Virtual

- Attendees:
 - Jodi Harris, Tina Lane, Martha Mazzarino, Margaret Eklind, Desiree Combs, Ryan Madrigal, Shelly Bradbury, Town Administrator Brendhan Zubricki, BOS Chair Ruth Pecten, Town Planner Dana Menon, public - Suzanne OBrien
- Meeting called to order at 7:03 pm by Chairman Harris.
- Public Comment: None
- Minutes from the 1/19/23 meeting were tabled to next meeting
- Downtown Lighting Design Update
 - Dana shared that there are 23 light fixtures planned for the causeway from Woodman's to Martin Street on the south (Woodman's) side. Brendhan reported John Blair, the Town of Ipswich light superintendent, is interested in doing the above ground portion of the work for the project.
 - Discussion:
 - Are fixtures dark sky compliant? (Directs light downwards towards pedestrian zone without creating light pollution). Community feedback says that is what's desired.
 - BZ urged committee to make decisions so that we can move forward with the ordering process
 - Committee approved fluted pole type
 - Of the 3 choices presented, option 2 was chosen for simplicity, traditional style and amount of glass surface. Brendhan later suggested the Clearwater Dark Sky fixture which was also clean with less ornamentation
 - 2 flower hanging brackets will be spec'd for every pole, along with banner arms. We can decide at installation time if we want them for each pole
- New Sidewalk and lighting conduit
 - Brendhan asked DOT if they could put conduit and handholds every 50 feet for the length of project from Water Street to the Gloucester city line. It is a significant cost, but they did not say no and will get back to us on that request. The sidewalk project was not dependent on lighting request.
- Priority Development sites – Dana
 - North Shore Alliance provides a community page that can be edited by the town. We can do a writeup to "Learn More About Essex". It also provides the opportunity to feature 3 priority development sites via a portal that is open to the public. Developers can reach out to the owners of the properties.
 - Dana asked EDC to identify properties to be featured.
 - Old Ginn property across from the Boathouse. There is no town water or sewer. (The Boathouse and Ice cream store are on Ipswich Water)
 - Quinn Bros by Essex Pizza on Rt 22. There is a space available sign
 - Allen Property on Southern Ave. Brendhan mentioned that it will be auctioned as is. Dana offered that Brownfield dollars are available.
 - Dana asked for ideas to compose a 1 line marketing phrase for the Priority Development blog for businesses ie. why should a business choose your municipality to expand their business?
 - Discussion:
 - Jodi offered that Essex needs good paying full time jobs with benefits. Dana suggested her interpretation, "Ready and willing full time employment pool".
 - Shelly mentioned many new women owned businesses in town. While there is no track record yet for these businesses, Jodi said that complimentary businesses could be attracted. Per MAPC Econ Dev survey, residents wanted more services. Dana's interpretation, "Strong local desire for more services, also entrepreneur friendly".
 - Ryan suggested looking at Beverly's writeup as reference
 - Shelly mentioned the business concept for the Phoenix Salon in Beverly. Jodi said that a developer would need to pursue that.

- Goals and Objectives - Jodi
 - Asked everyone to update the status on their projects
 - Jodi introduced the EDC Status report template to the BOS.
 - If implemented by other boards, public can be kept up to date rather than reading minutes of Quarterly meetings of BOS. For example, the status of the sale of parcels at Gregory Island.
 - Status report is a work in progress. Discussion:
 - Brendhan explained his suggested edits to the template workbook. A Summary tab would be followed by additional tabs for each project. Each board could create and manage their reports with possible links to other boards/depts.
 - Jodi, speaking to other departments said the feedback is good, but that setup is the biggest challenge. The top of each department's page could include information for the public ie: number of staff, equipment inventory, FAQ's, etc
 - Brendan said that the EDC can pilot the effort, get it working and can expand usage to other boards and departments. The town will have Office 365 program access in July and it can grow on that platform. Ryan suggested the use of One Drive folders
 - Jodi saw this as a great for boards and residents. Fewer surprises, more information, less misinformation
 - Shelly said her name is not anywhere on the report, specifically placemaking. Jodi said at this time Civic Space is assigned to placemaking and that quorum is also a factor.
 - Tina shared that she created a "News and Announcements" section on the EDC page and suggested that anyone who wanted to volunteer for something could contribute a writeup on one of our many newsworthy projects. Brendhan offered to get the ball rolling by doing a writeup on the Pavilion Project.
- New 2023 projects – Jodi invited members to submit ideas and she can add to agenda
- Guide to doing business - Tina & Margaret
 - Comments on the draft web pages "Starting a Business" and "Doing Business in Essex"
 - Dana commented that the titling is confusing and suggested emphasizing the permitting process on the Doing Business in Essex page and the Starting a Business page could emphasize resources and planning your business". She suggested a matrix checklist to organize information on process ie name of business / approval board(s) /etc so that the business owner could check off tasks. Suggested adding NS alliance and Enterprise center to "Business Resources" page
 - Shelly suggested edits to Doing Business in Town of Essex intro paragraph rough draft
- Placemaking grant update - Dana
 - Next meeting for the team is planned for March 7 or 9.
 - Civic Space Collaborative, CSC, sent documents for review and comment including a deliverables summary, requesting feedback on where they should focus their efforts and a spreadsheet for exactly what ideas and which pieces need to be figured out
 - CSC is listening to input. Re: plant pallette, they are asking about local landscape gurus who could help with getting a plant list together. Dana pointed them to Robin Kanter. Jodi wanted to see what the CSC had come up with and to run it by Robin for her review. She wants the plant list by the second week in March to review pricing for town meeting.
- Off season event - Jodi
 - The event is a huge challenge with lots of cooks in the kitchen
 - Instead of a winter event, it was moved to May 19, 20 & 21, between Mother's Day and Memorial Day weekends. Business owners thought the winter timeframe was too short to get anything done and that it's not a very pretty at that time of the year. If we brought people here, people would not want to come back during that time. Dana added that a lot of businesses are closed at that time.
 - Jodi feels we've been backburnered because consultant has other events. We are moving slowly.
 - Business outreach communications will come out in advance of next outreach meeting. Jodi added that it is important to expand our reach beyond the Chamber, since many are not in the Chamber. Donna created a flyer to share with Chamber, Merchants Group, Bludot participants and people in our EDC network. We are trying to get email addresses for EDC database.

- Centennial Grove Pavilion update
 - Jodi spoke with Dan Mayer. No update other than to report footings and timbers will be ready next month.
 - With our decision to keep the Grove Cottage in our control for rentals, we are looking into a grant for upgrades to bathrooms and lights at the grove
 - An expression of interest has been submitted to 1 Stop Funding. The grant maker will reach out to Brendhan with Dana and YMCA on the line, to come up with good points to include in the application. Application results are anticipated to come in the Fall
 - Jodi said Donna sees the rental opportunity for the Cottage is equal to or greater than for the Pavilion with corporate retreats, family rentals, birthday parties, baby showers etc.
- Recap of Economic Summit in Gloucester - Brendhan
 - Mass Office of Business Development presented a variety of grant programs to help businesses. Brendhan suggest a mini version be presented to the BOS. He highlighted the PACE program:
 - PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) program allows a commercial business to get a project done and pay project back thru town as a betterment
 - Town would adopt the program
 - Town not on the hook for the money and no risk
 - Money gets passed thru the town
 - BOS can approve and make available to interested businesses
 - BZ will share copy of slides so we can post to the EDC website
 - Maria Di Stefano from Mass Development shared a contact with Jodi who will point businesses to help with utility costs
 - Jodi said that we can provide this type of State business development information at EDC outreach to businesses via quarterly coffee meetings
- 1:33 Town owned parcels - Brendhan
 - Brendhan suggested we go through the process with 1st group of parcels before putting more on town meeting warrant. We need to come to town meeting with a success story.
 - Shelly asked what success looked like? Brendhan said it is that the town marketed parcels, offers came in, and parcels were successfully sold without the expense of appraisals or property line surveys
 - We are waiting for the Assessors office to insure assessed values are current and for the Building Inspector to verify the parcels are not buildable because if so, it would be offered at a much higher floor price. If sold, will recommend to BOS the deeds carry a restriction so they will never be buildable
 - After considering many potential scenarios it was agreed that further discussion is needed
- Next EDC meeting will be held virtually on Thursday, 3/16/23 at 7:00.
- Meeting Adjourned 8:49

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Lane