

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

- Attendees:
 - Donna Roy, Jodi Harris, Tina Lane, Martha Mazzarino, Shelly Bradbury, Town Administrator
 - Brendhan Zubricki, BOS Chair Ruth Preen, Town Planner Dana Menon
- Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm by Chairman Harris.
- Public Comment: None
- Minutes from the 1/19/23 & 2/16/23 meetings were approved
- Downtown Lighting Design Update
 - Brendhan shared fixture options from Spring City Electrical. The committee was not happy with any of the choices as their preference was for a simple, clean and historic style for this area, referencing a picture that Jim Witham had provided. Brendhan noted that we need to zero in on a picture of what we want so we can share with the contractor who will find a supplier. After searching, the committee found an appropriate image to share. Brendhan will include Jim Witham's picture in his correspondence with the contractor and confirm our choice of black posts and black lanterns.
- New Sidewalk and possible lighting from conduits from Water Street to Gloucester line
 - Brendhan is waiting for a response from DOT
- Priority Development sites / North Shore Alliance program – Dana
 - Dana completed a questionnaire that the NS Alliance can use to feature Essex on their blog. Jodi offered that we stress in the writeup that Essex is looking for services (grocery store, pharmacy, etc) for its residents.
 - The page lets us feature 3 property development sites. Considered are the property across from the Boathouse, Quinn Bros by Essex Pizza on Rt 22 & Allen Property on Southern Ave. We can add whatever properties we want via their portal.
 - Jodi is concerned we are premature in marketing something given: 1) we are going thru the zoning process, 2) we are unsure of the status of the private properties mentioned, and 3) Quinn Bros property is office rental, not development.
 - BZ suggested we clear the property info on the NS Alliance site for now and post when we have current information
- Parking Signage at the Municipal Parking Lot
 - Jodi and Dana visited the municipal lot and is looking for clarity in signage. People need to know there is public parking and that they can't park in certain areas where cars with trailers park during that season. Signage is confusing, perhaps less is more? Dana showed photos of existing signage.
 - Discussion: Donna suggested to paint trailer sections. Maintenance would be a consideration. Brendan added that the middle section is open to anyone if not the weekend or holiday or not within the boating season. This If/Then/Else situation makes clear signage difficult. Brendhan noted that big signs are ignored which is why there are many small signs with specific instructions. He suggested committee members drive through the lot to assess the parking instructions, imagining they are pulling a trailer and then as a resident or out of town looking to park their car. He reminded that to police the area, signage needs to be clear, not ambiguous in order to ticket.
- Doing business guide – Margaret & Tina
 - Tina reports it is still a work in progress
- Placemaking Grant update – Jodi & Dana
 - Jodi reported they have moved planting plan off the consultant's plate to Robin Kanter, a town volunteer who has provided that service. They are on track to install before the off-season event sometime in April. Additional annuals to be installed and they are working with Patti Byrne of Blue Moon who is doing specialty growing for the volunteer.
 - Open house for placemaking will be 3/29 4-7 PM at the library. Contractor Civic Space Collaborative needs to work with Deb French at the library to make sure the space can accommodate those attending the open house and the visuals. The auditorium is also available if necessary. The open house is the public's opportunity to look at design elements where they pick and choose their preferences. Focus is on 24 Martin Street and wayfinding elements.

- Off Season Event - Jodi & Donna
 - The event is on for May 19-21. Will meet with Michell Moon, from Civic Space on details tomorrow (3/17). Donna and Jodi have put in many hours in group and subgroup meetings. They have a healthy list of great ideas to draw people to town. The bridge will be opening late April to early May and a ribbon cutting ceremony will take place on Saturday at 10 am during the event. Brendhan has reached out to our state senator and representative who will then reach out to other state officials to come.
 - Brendhan reported that Paglia park will be in the process of construction site dismantling making it an eyesore. We will need to come up with a solution to hide the site.
 - Sarah from North Shore magazine contacted Donna. The next issue will feature Essex. The off-season event will be mentioned so that is promotional dollars that we do not have to spend.
 - Prior to event (Thu or Fri) sidewalk chalk artists will create art on the sidewalk and up and over the seawall by CK Pearl
 - Designer Anna Hardy is working with retailers and will take charge of the “flower flash” where strategic areas will be adorned with materials from local landscapers and homeowners. Areas included are both sides of the causeway coming off Southern Ave. to Martin St. and also the Welcome to Essex sign (entering from Ipswich) near Hardy’s field.
 - Durable goods purchased include table and chairs as that will be used at the Pavilion
 - An amateur photo contest will be held. They are looking for a handful of photographers to be judges. A select number of photo entries will be mounted on aluminum, weatherproofed and driven into the ground to be on display the entire season among the pocket parks and other spaces all throughout Essex. They will be titled and feature a QR code to allow people to cast a vote. To find each photo, people will need to move about town.
 - A scavenger hunt geocache, selfie stations at businesses and a balloon artist are also being discussed
 - Carmon Emery volunteered to do PR. She is taking charge of social media event promotion on Instagram and a Facebook Event page so businesses have the opportunity to post if they don’t have a webpage or in addition to their webpage.
 - Desiree & Tina expressed interest in creating a selfie station where ESSEX is spelled out in flower letters where people can be photographed as the “X”. Robin Kanter can advise on the structure.
 - Shelly suggested local artists be invited to participate as chalk artists or that Monserrat students would love to to help with designs. She also mentioned the use of sails to do an installation which can hide the construction site. Brendhan cautioned about the installation blowing over and if the construction fence is strong enough to attach sails
 - Jodi will also reach out to Susan Coviello to see if there is interest in hosting a mini plein air event.
 - Cape Ann Rowing Club Essex River Race conflict
 - Brendhan mentioned that they are advertising on their website to hold an event the same weekend using the Shipbuilding Museum and launching from the town ramp. With the ramp closed to non-residents, they are looking at Riversbend to privately launch but it will still be a drain on police and harbor master services. He is asking if the committee sees this as part of our event.
 - In preparation of the off-season event Jodi spoke to Chief Francis who viewed our event as a town event so he will work to organize his shifts to accommodate us. She also emailed Cape Ann Rowing on Jan 5th asking about their plans in order to avoid a scheduling conflict but they did not respond. Jodi observed that the club charges an entrance fee, and offers food, alcohol, and entertainment for the participants after the race which extends the time of their event beyond the actual race. With that, she questioned if businesses would benefit from the participants being in town
 - Shelly asked if their event was early enough to avoid conflict. Jodi said that while the on the river events end around 11:00, the after-race party would continue.
 - Dana questioned if the group had even reached out to the Shipbuilding Museum as the Museum was considering hosting music of their own on that day. Jodi pointed out that the Rowing Club is showing “Finalized” on their website regarding the race day schedule and location.

- Brendhan offered that a member of the Club who is also a chamber member, Ernie Romanowski, was not sure if the club had any plans nailed down and was unsure who was posting the info to their website. In the end they are unable to do what they are saying as the ramp not open to them. Jodi mentioned that if they want to do the race, the town should not bear expense for harbormaster and police detail.
 - Committee agreed that the race is not part of this event
- Gregory Island properties sales
 - Brendhan reported that per the Building Inspector, none of the lots, on their face individually, are buildable in regard to area, frontage or both but a collection of 3 lots are potentially buildable
 - The Assessors will update the parcel values to today's market for vacant non buildable lot. After that we can have the discussion "what if" 3 parcels are combined. If not, individual parcels will be sold with deed restrictions that say they will never be buildable. The town does not want to have sold a 300K lot for 3K. Jodi thought it was important that if we have the potential to create a single buildable lot that can be sold for 300k we should take that opportunity.
 - Jodi is happy with the progress of this effort and suggested we see this initial process to the end before taking on the sale of another town owned property.
- Returning to the lighting discussion, Jodi said that if Brendhan is provided with lighting options, the committee can host a quickie meeting to vote to approve.
- Next EDC meeting will be held virtually on Thursday, 4/27/23 at 7:00.
- Meeting Adjourned 8:26

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Lane