

Jul 20, 2023, 7:00 p.m. EDC Meeting Minutes – Town Hall Conference Room

- Attendees:
 - Jodi Harris, Georgeanne Richards, Margaret Eklind, Ryan Madrigal, Stacey Clarimundo, Shelly Bradbury, Tina Lane, Town Administrator Brendhan Zubricki, BOS Chair Ruth Pereen, Town Planner Dana Menon
- Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm by Chairman Harris.
- Public Comment: None
- Minutes from the 6/8/23 meeting were approved.
- Downtown Lighting Design Update
 - Discussion of metal plaque designs with shipbuilding theme to be placed into the concrete flags of the new lampposts. KD Montgomery of the Shipbuilding Museum had provided a selection of Essex-built ships to be featured in the project. 52 ships will be selected for both the 23 new lampposts and future lampposts. A design for the metal plaque was inspired by ship construction drawings. It features a mid-ship hull section, the name and date of the ship, and “Essex Built Ships” below.
 - Plans from Stantech have yet to be delivered. Stantech are the engineers, we will get bids for contractor to do sub surface work, Ipswich Municipal Light will pull wires through conduits and feeders & install poles, all the above ground work. Specialized cement site work contractors for plaque installation must be part of bid.
 - Jodi & Shelly walked the causeway to consider orientation and placement of the plaques, factoring the inconsistent location of existing utility poles. They have questions and plan to make another site visit, hopefully with plans from Stantech.
 - The plaques will have pins to anchor them in the cement “flags”. The cement mix must be the correct slurry consistency so the plaques can be pressed in. Shelly will be available to advise the site work subcontractor. Brendhan will contact Gloucester to learn how they worked with artwork pressed into the sidewalk and how it has held up through traffic and sidewalk plowing. Shelly will create a design for Brendhan to present to Stantech.
 - EDC needs to bring the cost estimate and design to BOS. If under \$10K no bids are required. Estimate is \$7,800 for the first 23 plaques. We can request funds for the rest of the plaques in the next fiscal year. Goal is to buy all at the same time for consistency (material, typeface etc). One source of funds can be \$40K from the pavement marking project.
 - Committee voted to approve: KD’s recommendations for ship selection, brass material, Grenze typeface, to add the top deck to graphic, to add hyphen to Essex – Built Ships, type is all CAPS.
 - Shelly will get formal pricing from the fabricator. She also requested \$500 payment to graphic designer as each plaque requires separate graphic files. Brendhan will bring that request to the BOS.
- Folsom Pavilion replacement project update.
 - Footings are poured, crushed stone and slab coming soon.
 - Raw lumber was locally milled and sent to Maine for joinery (both pegs and metal). With ledge on site, it required that the pavilion be turned 90 degrees to avoid the cost of blasting. The gable end will face the lake. Some trees will be removed or limbed to enhance view of the lake. The next stage is frame up and roof.
 - Brendhan presented a drawing for a prefab concrete building with 6 changing rooms/ bathrooms to be located near the pavilion. It will flow to a tight tank. For the foundation they will dig down to gravel & fill with stone. The building will be lifted into place with

- a crane. The cost for the prefab is \$320K. The town has applied for a Small Town Rural Grant to help fund the building.
- Jodi mentioned the need for security at the grove after this \$1M+ investment as porta potties have been tipped and the garage broken into.
 - Discussion: There is no internet and a revenue stream will be needed to pay a monthly fee for internet service. Cameras require file storage. Ryan suggested if 4g cell service available you can get solar powered cameras with a module at police station, someone to monitor. Tina asked if cottage rentals would need wifi (as an amenity). Brendhan suggested we can extend the fiber spur at water plant, funded with a grant, and once we have a signal there is no monthly fee for municipal use.
 - Brendhan reported that specified work on cottage includes an additional 1 bathroom, its own tight tank, year round water and heating system.
 - Ruth suggested looking into the town events fund. There is also \$300K in a parks special fund and grant possibilities.
 - Jodi mentioned fundraising opportunities and how Dan Mayer expressed that once the slab was poured he would like to have a community event.
 - Paglia Park update.
 - An agreement with owner Elaine Paglia will be signed. Contractor is obliged to establish grass. We have permission to landscape. Margaret was concerned that the table location was too close to the street but Jodi pointed out there are guard rails between the grass and street. There will be open grass area for kids to run around.
 - Shelly asked if the benches will match those on the causeway? Jodi suggested we may move from the black benches to a different design in the future per placemaking plan but there are no firm decisions yet.
 - Possibly \$8K in funds reimbursement for in kind time from BZ/Dana for Essex in Bloom will be available to help pay for tables & trash barrels. Trash barrels on the causeway are a priority and their placement on the causeway is not an issue with state and the DPW will empty.
 - Placemaking Grant Wrap-up. Dana
 - The technical assistance grant closed the end of June. Consultants presented the final plan and it is now on the town website on the home and EDC pages. We need funding to execute the plan. The plan includes streetscape furniture and designs concept that support the “ship shape” theme.
 - Handoff to Business Community for Next Year’s “Spring into Essex”.
 - Donna spoke w/ Merchants and there is some interest for next year. They need to form a group to carry torch. Some supplies purchased for the the event are stored in the grove cottage garage. Jodi expressed concerned about security.
 - Review of mobile food or mobile sale of goods draft Selectmen’s policy.
 - Background: A vendor came before the BOS wanting “exclusive” regular access to baseball games at the Memorial Park. The BOS said not at this time because they want to consider whether a policy should be established. Currently food trucks are inspected and licensed by the BOH.
 - Discussion:
 - Food trucks impact local businesses who may serve ice cream, lobster rolls, etc. Brendhan said we need to manage a public asset for private gain. There is no benefit to Essex if meals tax goes out of town. The town makes money from permits. Ruthie wants input on permitting: Per event? Annual? Seasonal? Lottery? Allotted places? Hours? What amount of fee?

- Jodi asked if the policy can be created to favor our town businesses over out of town vendors. Brendhan suggested yes, via an RFP with parameters, perhaps a point system where Essex businesses get more points. Margaret mentioned transient vendors on boats and Brendhan said they would be included as the policy applies to anyone selling goods, however vendors on the waterways is another discussion where Marine Law is a factor.
- Ryan asked about enforcement. BZ said they need to display a permit. Police can ask them to move along without it. Ryan suggested a daily fee as vendors move to different locations and may not want to invest in an annual permit.
- Ruth shared that Gloucester has a lottery for 13 licenses for 13 locations. Our BOS chose 3 high traffic locations in Essex to offer (Conomo Point, Centennial Grove and Shepard Memorial Park) and added that a policy may not be needed at this time but the board is trying to be proactive, to establish guardrails. In reaching out to Kim from Googan's Galley, she learned that between 6am-2pm they are busy so allowing food trucks after 2pm would not impact her business. She added, for example, if Woodman's had a food truck, it could bring meals tax funds to the town whereas Lobster Roller meals tax goes to Gloucester where their food truck is garaged. She reported a pop-up clothing shop out of a VW bus was on Main and Southern and without a town transient vendor policy there was nothing to enforce.
- Ryan agreed that we need a policy because many food vendors are not investing in brick and mortar when they can have 4 food trucks with the flexibility to go to where there is a need.
- Jodi said we need to consider the cost to town to have food trucks with additional town personnel hours for inspections, processing, etc. Brendhan added that the permit fees to cover costs, need to be within reason, passing the Emerson College test, if not it can be deemed an illegal tax. Brendhan said we can know the costs as the BOH knows the amount of hours paid to a third party for inspections. Ryan suggested we start the fees based on that amount.
- Jodi shared Donna's observations of the Clam Fest. Restaurants do no business on that day and are asked to donate chowder and staff. The town gains no sales/meal tax or permit fees from the transient vendors. Georgeanne agreed that it is not a promotion for town. Visitors use parking and shop from outside vendors. It takes from Essex businesses. Most small businesses do not have the staff to participate in the Clam Fest and man their business on that day. Ruth added that Donna thought food trucks are trending because of staffing. They can put 1 or 2 in a truck for an event but can't run a restaurant with 1 or 2 people. It is the way of future.
- Dana suggested having a designated home base or address in Essex for food trucks would give us the meals tax, perhaps a common commercial kitchen.
- Georgeanne questioned if this policy applies to artists brought into her business. Brendhan said it does not fall under this policy because it's an established business. She asked about brides bringing food trucks to their homes for bridal showers or rehearsal dinners. Brendhan said the BOH issues permits to the truck owner who has license so a homeowner doesn't need to apply.
- Ryan suggested that since we know what is the cost to town, we can establish a rolling policy to allow vendors now, which can be adjusted later.
- Ruth will ask Donna to reach out to Chamber of Commerce members to get feedback from businesses
- Committee should email their feedback on the policy to Jodi to pass on to the BOS.

- Update on possible volunteer title research for owner unknown property at 128/Southern Ave.
 - Not a “Volunteer” as he charges \$25-40/hr. The BOS will decide the amount of legal fee cap.
 - Cell Signaling project in Manchester may want services so there is an opportunity for commercial development at this location which is contiguous to their property.
 - The challenge for the researcher is to track descendants. Brendhan said past research is in house and available to share. It is just the tip of the iceberg.
 - Committee voted to approve Brian Barbre for title search services.
- Discuss a reconsideration of possibly adopting the short-term rental local impact fee at the 2023 Fall Town Meeting.
 - Impact fee of 3% added to the current 6%
 - Need fact sheet of who, what, when, where, why to present to voters.
 - Owners don’t pay but will pass on to cost to renters.
 - We have no idea exact properties but AirBNB & Virbo tracks fees.
 - Income is \$36K, with new revenue \$50K (from ATM increase)
- Discussion of Revenue in Essex – current and future was tabled to the next meeting.
- Maria DeStephano from Mass Office of Business Development will meet with the EDC in Fall. We are waiting for dates from Maria. We can invite business owners & the BOS. Programs offered that can provide immediate relief are the Electric Bill Savings and the Loan Deferral Program. Ruth added that BOS meetings are recorded for later viewing. We can use a recording spot for this joint meeting.
- Next EDC meeting will be held at town hall on Thursday, 8/31/23 at 7:00.
- Meeting Adjourned 9:15

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Lane