

January 26, 7:00 p.m. EDC Meeting Minutes - Virtual

- Attendance:
 - Jodi Harris, Martha Mazzarino, Donna Roy, Westley Burnham, Margaret Eklind, Ryan Madrigal, Tina Lane, Town Administrator Brendhan Zubricki, Board of Selectman Chair Ruth Perea and Town Planner Dana Menon
- Meeting called to order at 7 pm, by Chairman Harris.
- Introduction of new EDC members Tina Lane, Ryan Madrigal and Margaret Eklind and reintroduction of current members.
- Brief review of the creation of EDC by the Strategic Planning Committee
- Appointment of Tina Lane as secretary for minutes
- Cape Ann Comeback program (part of the Cape Ann Communities Grant) update
 - Donna explained how businesses can enter data into the Bludot platform.
 - Brendhan reported that 238 participated with 60 opting for email communications
 - Jodi suggested using the data to communicate important information to businesses in a timely manner for example, the availability of grants or the status of mask mandates. Will review the platform advantages as Bludot is a service with a fee attached
 - Brendhan added a link to app.bludot.io on the EDC page of the town website.
- Local Rapid Recovery Technical Assistance Grant Program update
 - Dana explained that the towns of Essex and Manchester applied jointly for this grant. Report can be found on the town website under "Projects & Reports"
 - Of the 10 recommendations in the report 6 projects can be submitted for funding (3 from each town). Chosen projects focus areas include placemaking, hiring a short term EDC project manager, off season events, outdoor lighting, zoning, & wayfinding.

- Zoning MAPC grant recommendation for 2023
- Annual Report draft review
 - Add bullet that Essex partnered with Manchester by the Sea for LRRP
- Goals of the EDC - developing a work plan
 - Tina commented that the stated goals were too broad. Wes advised that the Strategic Plan goals are higher level goals to be passed to another group for implementation
 - Ryan shared that he had seen private management of public property in some towns, i.e., ice skating rink and grocery stores, where both sides can benefit financially, and inquired if there were opportunities like that in Essex
 - Brendhan mentioned the ongoing discussion with the Y and the use of the cottage at the grove. Jodi expressed concern about townspeople losing access to the grove. Wes was not in favor of ceding control to the Y.
 - Margaret suggested the “Welcome to Dedham” booklet for reference and volunteered to work on recommendation #2 Create guidelines to assist businesses in locating and expanding in Essex and #3 Attract new businesses to respond to the needs of residents, residents from surrounding communities, and visitors to the area.
 - Wes suggested the EDC take note of what is happening at the Planning Board meetings to see the opinions of different groups regarding zoning
- Discuss Building a business database
 - Tina expressed interest in working with the database. It is unclear how accessible the Bludot data is to other users other than Donna and Brendhan
- Promotional funding from the town budget
 - Jodi suggested using the funding in a different way to keep up with what we have already improved, i.e., pocket parks, benches along the causeway, by clearing weeds and adding flower baskets to create a unified look.
 - Ryan asked if the businesses in that area get advantage

- Donna explained the history of the pocket parks as part of the beautification group and the merchants group. Businesses wanted signage but it was not allowed. Maintaining flowers and planting cost >\$6,000/year.
- Brendhan added that the DPW has its hands full with basic town yard maintenance and cannot be tasked with maintaining flower baskets. Gloucester has a private group that maintains its flowers.
- Tina observed that beautification efforts are restricted to the area between the street and the business' lot line and the new light poles when they are installed. Wes mentioned that the state controls the land the sidewalks are on. Brendhan said that NGrid does not allow access to its poles for signage due to liability.
- Donna can offer research of beautification efforts from Essex Merchants Group and the now defunct Essex Enhancement Committee.
- Approval of June 8th and October 13th minutes

Next EDC meeting will be held virtually on March 3 at 7:00

- Meeting adjourned 9:10

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Lane