

Committee Members

Keith Peden, Chair
Zachary Knowlton, Vice Chair
Richard Di Iulio, Member
Mark Schultz, Member
Cassandra McKenzie, Member
Khalid Abdi, Member



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TOWN OF MEDWAY COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes

Thursday, September 17, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, and the Governor's Orders imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, no in-person attendance of members of the public was permitted at this meeting. Information for participating via Zoom was posted at the end of the Agenda on the town website. All persons participated remotely in the meeting via Zoom

Members Present (virtually): Zach Knowlton, Chair, Rich Di Iulio, Mark Schultz, Cassandra McKenzie

Members Absent: Keith Peden, Khalid Abdi

Also Present (virtually):

Barbara J. Saint Andre, Director, Community and Economic Development
Katherine Mitchell, Recording Secretary

Chair Knowlton opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

New Business

Assistance to business owners affected by COVID-19 emergency

Ms. Saint Andre had forwarded to the members the Governor's order, allowing municipalities to extend outdoor dining for up to 60 days after the state of emergency ends. The Board of Selectmen had this on its agenda Monday night and passed it. There is a lot of anxiety for when the weather gets colder that restaurants will have less business, as many people prefer to eat outside. Ms. Saint Andre stated this extension gives businesses the option to continue with outdoor seating in case they are able to. Ms. McKenzie asked if Medway asked to receive additional funding to support businesses under the shared spaces grant program. Ms. Saint Andre stated that no businesses requested to use a sidewalk or parking spaces on a public street for outdoor dining, so the Town did not see a necessity to apply for this grant. If there is interest, the Town will look into applying. Restaurants are using their own parking lots and property for outdoor dining.

Chair Knowlton will connect with Mr. Peden regarding an update on partnership with the Medway Business Council.

Outreach to owners of land available for commercial lease

Ms. Saint Andre mentioned that a representative from Charter Realty, who represents Medway Commons,

called to inquire about the status of the drive thru located at the former McDonalds. Drive thru facilities are no longer allowed in the Central Business District, so the question is whether the existing one is still allowed as a prior nonconforming use, or if it has been discontinued. Mr. Di Iulio stated this was discussed at a Planning and Economic Development Board (PEDB) meeting. He stated the Commons has been marketing that space, so the PEDB felt that the drive thru was not in jeopardy. Chair Knowlton asked Mr. Di Iulio to confirm this information. He stated losing the drive thru would not be beneficial to community.

Proposed goal on creating a skills data base

Mr. Schultz researched various companies who provide a similar service to his proposal for a directory of all town businesses. He went through the websites to see the ease of use and the information that was used. Mr. Schultz stated he did not get a sense of whether the businesses were currently active. He also stated the sites were not user friendly. Mr. Di Iulio stated if a website will not be easily accessible or not easy to use, people will not use it. Mr. Di Iulio is also concerned about the cost. Ms. Saint Andre suggested working with Art Prutsalis of the Medway Business Council to see if we can get the data and to see what information it already has. Ms. Saint Andre offered to reach out to him. Chair Knowlton questioned what the goal was. He stated it might increase traffic to businesses, but it seems intense from a resource and funding standpoint. Chair Knowlton suggested solidifying the goal of the project.

Central Business zoning district – input on potential Zoning By-law changes

Ms. Saint Andre and other town staff attended a Zoom meeting with the Town's Consultant, Ted Brovitz. One of the overriding issues was to transform the stretch of Route 109 to make it more appealing. Along Route 109 there are many sites with a vast parking lot in the front and businesses in the back. They discussed how to bring businesses closer to the street. The goal is to have that area of Route 109 more aesthetically pleasing, include mixed used developments, and have better accessibility. Drive thru's are utilized in this area but can deter pedestrian access. Most of the parcels are already developed, but a couple parcels are not fully developed. The PEDB and Mr. Brovitz want to hear from EDC to get ideas from our point of view on this area.

Ms. McKenzie mentioned the Driving Range and Cassidy Corner. She questioned if the Town is looking to buy them or encourage the owners to develop them? Ms. Saint Andre stated the Town would like to encourage the owners to develop. Mr. Di Iulio stated a plaza is being added near Town Fair Tire. It was mentioned that Condon Hardware will not be renewing its lease at the Plaza. There are some efforts to try to get the owner to sell the business instead of closing the business. The EDC members are looking to encourage businesses along the street- streetscape and create foot traffic. Mr. Di Iulio suggested pop-up shop areas within a walkable neighborhood. Businesses can set up for a short period of time. This type of idea is used in Boston to generate foot traffic for other businesses. He also mentioned the Farmers Market in Franklin. This could be an attraction in Medway as well. Ms. McKenzie mentioned Choate Park. Potentially they could encourage local farms to do a pop-up along Route 109. Mr. Di Iulio stated he is unsure of by-laws in that area but it is worth looking into.

Mr. Knowlton mentioned having a restaurant week including a fixed menu around the same price point. Potentially Medway could partner with Franklin and other towns. This type of event discounts food a little but increases customers and sales. Mr. Di Iulio agreed this is a good idea. This could be good for the Town even after COVID. Could help businesses long term as well as through this year. Chair Knowlton stated these are good ideas and to continue thinking of ideas for next spring and summer.

Reports

Use of Economic Data

Refreshed data from Metrowest Partnership was received. The data gives overarching specifics as well as community specifics. Mr. Di Iulio mentioned on the first page it references residents 25 plus with a bachelor's degree or higher. He mentioned trade skills is an important statistic to track as well. Ms. McKenzie agreed it is a great point but questioned how that could be captured within the community. Mr. Knowlton stated they could make a proposal to UMass Dartmouth to acknowledge trade data.

Committee members discussed various data from the updated report.

Planning and Economic Development Board

Mr. Di Iulio mentioned the Medway Plaza site plan, the Plaza representative has stated the Plaza is waiting on storm water work with DPW before coming back to the PEDB. The Board is also trying to do several street acceptances. It is also working on Central Business District zoning, as well as Medway Mills site plan review, which is ongoing in conjunction with the conservation commission as wetlands are involved.

Minutes Approval August 20, 2020

On a motion made by Rich Di Iulio; seconded by Cassandra, the Economic Development Committee voted unanimously by roll call vote to approve the minutes of August 20, 2020.

Zach Knowlton	Aye
Cassandra McKenzie	Aye
Richard Di Iulio	Aye
Mark Schultz	Aye

Mr. Schultz mentioned the Route 109 area shopping center with large parking lots. He wonders if it is possible to obtain 4 foot by 8 foot boards for the local artists to show off their art. It could make the public space more attractive. This costs the town very little, generates foot traffic, and promotes local artists.

Chair Knowlton stated this would require approval from stores or review of the by-laws but he thinks it's a good idea. Mr. Di Iulio agrees it is a good idea as well and to be sure to get appropriate approvals. Ms. Saint Andre stated it is worth discussing with Cultural Council.

Next meeting: October 15, 2020

On a motion made by Ms. McKenzie; seconded by Mr. Di Iulio, the Economic Development Committee voted unanimously by roll call vote to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

Zach Knowlton	Aye
Cassandra McKenzie	Aye
Richard Di Iulio	Aye
Mark Schultz	Aye

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine Mitchell, Recording Secretary

Edited by Barbara J. Saint Andre
Director, Community and Economic Development