

BOARD/COMMITTEE: Economic Development Committee
MEETING DATE: March 9, 2023
TIME: 7:30 PM
PLACE: Remote Meeting on Zoom

Meeting called to order at 7:36PM

Members present: Mark White, John Neyland, Rich Guzzardi, Kristin Hilberg, and Marta Andreau

Ex Officio Members Present: Alexander Wade (Town Planner)

Community Members: Rebecca Verner (Planning Board)

Minutes:

Chairperson Guzzardi opened the meeting with the minutes from the February 16th, 2023.

Mark White motioned to approve the minutes from the February 16, 2023 EDC Meeting. Kristin Hilberg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously through roll call vote with White, Neyland, Guzzardi, Hilberg and Andreau all in favor.

Business Grant Program:

Town Planner Alexander (Alec) walked the committee through the current draft version of the Notice of Funding Authorization (NOFA) for the Small Business Grant program to be implemented with ARPA Funds. The committee discussed and debated the different business types that would be eligible for funding, how the program's scoring would work and how the funding would be disbursed. There was also discussion of the program's timing and the process we would follow for review of all applications. It was discussed that Mr. Wade would receive all applications and complete the initial scoring and recommendation, which would be presented to the EDC for approval or pass over. Various edits and notes were made to the draft NOFA that Mr. Wade would clean up for final approval. Once approved by the EDC the NOFA would need to be reviewed by Town Counsel.

Mark White motioned to authorize the EDC Chair (Rich Guzzardi) to approve the final NOFA and attachments prior to Mr. Wade submitting to Town Counsel for legal approval. Marta Andreau seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously through roll call vote: Neyland, Hilberg, White, Andreau and Guzzardi all voting aye.

Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Three articles were reviewed and discussed by the committee.

Green Communities: Mr. Wade indicated that he was going to complete a calculation of the cost impact to businesses and report that back to the EDC at its next meeting. White motioned to defer the EDC recommendation to Town Meeting. Hilberg seconded. Discussion centered on the importance of the EDC understanding what the economic/business impact is before approving any articles. The motioned was approved unanimously, with Neyland, Andreau, Hilberg, White and Guzzardi all voting aye.

Accessory Apartment Bylaw change: Mr. Wade shared the draft bylaw and described the changes from the prior bylaw including potential impacts from an economic perspective, such as drawing in a younger workforce. After some discussion, the EDC reached a consensus that this is not an article that the EDC should weigh in on, as the economic impact is not believed to be significant.

Tree Preservation Bylaw: Rebecca Verner (Planning Board) provided an overview of the bylaw and how it would work. There was much discussion about the merits of the bylaw (size of property impacted, marking and mapping requirements, process, costs), as well as concerns over the economic impact of the bylaw, on commercial land owners and the town, as well as the regulatory process. Ms. Verner indicated that there had not been an economic impact assessment completed on the bylaw. There was also a discussion by the committee on there being insufficient or any input from commercial land owners. Mark White explained that this is being proposed as a Town Bylaw, not a Zoning Bylaw change. A Zoning Bylaw change would require a public hearing where commercial land owners could provide input, as well as a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting. A general Bylaw, which this is being proposed as, does not require a public hearing and only a simple majority vote at Town Meeting. White further explained that a prior draft of the bylaw had the requirement applying to any land clearing of 1 acre or more, and that he thought it was more palatable for residents at 3 acres, which it is currently. He further indicated that commercial land owners might think differently. .

Guzzardi motioned that the Economic Development Committee **cannot** support this article at this time. The motion was seconded by Neyland. Discussion centered on understanding the value of preserving trees in our community, but whether or not there were different ways of achieving this, such as through Site Plan Approval. Ms. Verner explained that it was difficult to enforce actions through the Site Plan Approval Process. Guzzardi stated that, not unlike the Green Communities Bylaw (or any proposed bylaw or bylaw change), it is the EDC's responsibility to ensure that there is an economic impact assessment completed and that input is received from the affected parties before recommending a bylaw or bylaw change. As neither is the case with this bylaw, he could not support it at this time. The motion passed 4-1, with Hilberg, Andreau, Neyland and Guzzardi voting aye. White voted nay.

Town Center Grant Project

Mr. Wade indicated that he has not had the time since the last meeting to pull together a procurement package for the hiring of a consultant under the grant project for Town Center Redevelopment. Mr. Wade recommended that the committee consider voting to authorize the Chair to work with the Town Planner to develop and approve the procurement documents to get the process moving. Guzzardi said he would be supportive of that, but asked that Mr. Wade consider bringing the Chair of the Planning Board into the discussion, as it is important that this be a collaborative project with full alignment between Planning, EDC and other boards and committees. Mr. Wade concurred. White motioned to authorize the Chair of the EDC to approve procurement documents for the hiring of a consultant for Town Center under the Town Center Grant. Hilberg seconded the motion. The motion approved unanimously with Andreau, Neyland, Hilberg, White and Guzzardi all voting aye.

Adjournment:

White motion to adjourn at 10:15. Andreau seconded. All members voted in favor (White, Neyland, Andreau, Hilberg & Guzzardi)