

BOARD/COMMITTEE: Economic Development Committee
MEETING DATE: September 28, 2023
TIME: 7:30 PM
PLACE: Zoom Meeting

Chair, Rich Guzzardi, called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m.

Present: Kristin Hilberg, John Neyland, Rich Guzzardi, Abby Reip. Ex-Officio Members present: Alec Wade (Town Planner), Becky Neville (Finance Committee liaison). Boxborough Business Improvement Grant Applicant Lavanya Selveraj (Two Friends Chocolate).

Cassie LaRussa from Boxborough News was also present.

Member Marta Andreu joined at 9:15 p.m.

1. **Public Hearing:** At 8:06 p.m., Abby Reip moved to start the public hearing. John Neyland seconded the motion. Motion approved 4-0 by roll call vote.

Chair Guzzardi read the Public Hearing Statement into the record.

Levanya (Lala) Selveraj, co-owner of Two Friends Chocolate, presented her application by first giving a history of the business and then proceeded to detail her plan to expand her business by hiring another person who can help extend business hours, the addition of a hot chocolate stand and s'mores nook with the potential to expand to a café.

The applicant is requesting \$20,000 in funds and has documented her ability to match in the amount of \$23,000.

Chair Guzzardi opened the floor to non-committee comments.

Becky Neville asked if the application had been vetted by the town planner for zoning and septic regulations. Alec confirmed that he spoke with the building and health department to make sure that proposed usage meets compliance. Both gave it the "all clear."

Committee comments included praise for the products offered, questions about the sustainability of the disposable materials (cups, lids, etc.), and satisfaction that the grant offering was achieving the goals of the EDC in offering a gathering spot for the community. Questions regarding how the hours of operation would be expanded and how the layout both inside and outside would be configured were asked by the committee and answered by the applicant. Again, Town Planner Alec Wade confirmed that the scope of the plan fits within the permit.

Town Planner Alec Wade then shared his findings and recommendation for the application. It was scored based on the criteria set forth in the Scoring Rubric. Wade scored the application and members of the committee asked for details on some of the scores. Out of a possible score of 100 points, the application scored 81 points.

Kristin Hilberg moved to accept the score as presented by the town planner. Abby Reip seconded the motion. Motion approved 4-0 by roll call vote.

Kristin Hilberg moved to approve the application presented, with a provisional award granted of \$20,000 and to authorize the town planner and town counsel to issue an award letter to the same effect. Abby Reip seconded the motion.

Motion approved 4-0 by roll call vote.

Abby Reip moved to close the public hearing. Rich Guzzardi seconded the motion.

Motion approved 4-0 by roll call vote.

2. Minutes

Abby Reip moved to approve the minutes from the June 15, 2023 meeting. Kristin Hilberg seconded the motion. Motion approved 4-0 by roll call vote.

3. Board Organization

Chair Guzzardi indicated that Mark White was stepping down from the committee as a voting member because the revised EDC charter approved by the Select Board specifies only one member from the Planning Board (and Rich Guzzardi is a sitting member of the Planning Board). Becky Neville will remain as the liaison from the Finance Committee. Kristin Hilberg will also step down as a voting member but remain as liaison from the Select Board.

Voting membership will now be 5 members. The Select Board approved 5 – 9 voting members. Chair Guzzardi is comfortable with 5 members but would entertain 7.

At the next meeting, the Board will vote to name a chair and clerk.

4. Business Grant Program – ARPA Funding

Town Planner indicated that there is one business considering submitting an application. He was alerted that another business may also be interested in submitting an application.

5. Boxborough Business Breakfast/Brunch

This year, the EDC will invite only businesses and not include landowners (which was done previously), for an early December date. Chair Guzzardi indicated that the board is seeking to create a collaborative business environment amongst local businesses with tables where businesses can share ideas, products, co-marketing opportunities, etc. Planner Wade will send a Google Form to businesses to gauge availability for 8am – 1pm either Tuesday, December 5 or Wednesday, December 6.

6. Town Center Grant Project Update

The town planner issued a request for qualifications for consulting services. Has received one proposal from a very qualified applicant. A contract must be signed, and he will work with TA Johns to determine if the contract needs authorization from the Select Board. The project will need one or two EDC members to engage in a working group along with members from other town boards.

7. Business Database Internship Update

Efforts to get an intern for the town planner to build a business database to catalog properties, advertise grant opportunities, etc. has been approved and will be posted.

8. Agenda Items Deferred to Next Meeting

- Boxborough Business District Pop-Ups
- Water Resources Committee Feedback on RFP
- The Park at Beaver Brook – Review survey

Next meeting: October 12 at 7:30 p.m.

Future Dates: 10/26, 11/9, 11/30, 12/7, 12/21

Abby Reip moved to adjourn at 9:20 p.m. Kristin Hilberg seconded. Motion passed 5-0 by roll call vote.