**Economic Development Committee**



Butterick Building, 1 Park Street, Room 205

**ZOOM Meeting due to COVID-19**

December 28 2020

Time 8:30 AM

**Minutes**

**Present:** Chairman James Patacchiola, Keith Cordial, Paul Cathcart, Maureen Cranson, Michael Pineo

**Absent:**

**Non-Members present:**  Fred Aponte (Staff), Domenica Tatasciore (Staff), Kelly Hebert, Town Administrator (staff), Dick Maki, Lex Thomas (Consultant)

**Open Meeting:** Chairman Patacchiola opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

**Approval of Past Minutes:** James Patacchiola made the motion to accept the minutes of the November 30, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Keith Cordial. The motion was unanimously accepted.

**Town Planner Update**

Domenica Tatasciore has submitted a request for a Local Rapid Recovery Grant. This grant would be for technical assistance with the following priorities:

- Town Center district plan (historical and shopping)

 - Vacant store fronts, window/facade appearances

- Location of points of interest in town

- What to do in case of emergency

Ms. Tatasciore stated that we need an updated plan.

Maureen Cranson asked if other businesses in town had been considered, specifically those which had been affected by the Covid-19 virus. Ms. Tatasciore’s response was, “No, the grant has a specific locus (the town center)”. She continued that the grant results would give us an understanding of signage. Paul Cathcart remarked that there is no expense to us so “let’s do it”.

Ms. Tatasciore also reported that the Downtown Survey is almost done. It has excellent graphics.

**Business Recognition and Awards Program**

Keith Cordial had sent an email of his thoughts of which organizations to reward with a plaque and a letter. He narrowed it down to 2 or 3. He will get a quote on plaques.

There was much discussion regarding the concept of being careful of who the town of Sterling rewards. Paul Cathcart said the rewards need to be for specific reasons, ex. landscaping, using their funds to beautify the town or building renovations. We need to define the rules of who gets an award and why.

Lex Thomas stressed that the awards program should be a structured thing. She asked, “Who will be judging?” How do we measure the company’s contribution? She mentioned that the larger companies in town’s focus is not Sterling. She asked what each company would get out of the award. Paul Cathcart responded that they would not get any money, but would get the town’s appreciation.

Ms. Thomas suggested that the EDC look at Bolton’s Facebook page for ideas.

Ms. Thomas asked, “Who are we marketing this program through, Meetinghouse News, others?” Maureen Cranson mentioned “The Item” and SLCTV.

Since there are so many questions to be answered, Chairman Patacchioli recommended that a subcommittee be established to discuss the workings of the committee. Keith Cordial, Paul Cathcart, Jim Patacchioli and Maureen Cranson each volunteered to participate. There will be ZOOM meetings where they will come back with a plan. They will run it by Lex Thomas.

Dick Maki remarked that he knew of one sponsor interviewing restaurants with good results. Mr. Maki is behind the idea.

Keith Cordial will send an email to each of the volunteers with a couple of dates and times for the first ZOOM meeting.

**Promoting Sterling to Business Development**

Chairman Patacchiola commented that Domenica Tatasciore has worked to bring things up to date with zoning changes. He asked the question, “”What businesses do we want in town?” He used the unpopular example of a smoke shop. He said, “We want to be a destination”. He noted that we don’t have much now. The town should concentrate on the town center and store fronts. We need to find companies in the whole town, ex. Route 12 towards West Boylston.

Mike Pineo stated that there was room for improvement regarding the pilot projects that were done in the town center this past summer/fall. Ms. Tatasciore disagreed regarding the projects’ results. She alluded to the Meetinghouse Road / Library improvements which have garnered positive comments from people in town. She said the Aquifer changes will have an impact. “Things are moving forward.”

**Town Center Revitalization**

Regarding the Verizon situation: Paul Cathcart has been working with Sean Hamilton who is knowledgeable and knows Verizon very well. They walked the property and found that the project might not be as expensive as was originally thought. There has been little communication from Verizon recently. Sean will give them until the new year and then he and Mr. Cathcart will once again contact the Executive VP at Verizon. Mr. Cathcart will keep the EDC members posted via email.

**Sterling Inn Update**

Chairman Patacchiola spoke of a discussion he had recently had with Tori Luksha (who had given the EDC a presentation on the potential future plans for The Sterling Inn) and the Realtor for the property. Minimal advancement.

Maureen Cranson reiterated that there should be no favoritism among interested parties.

**New Members Updat**e

Chairman Patacchiola stated that there have been two people who have shown interest in being on the EDC. John Cherubini and John Dwyer. It is not certain whether Mr. Cherubini is a resident of Sterling or of Lancaster based on his property location. The EDC will find out.

**Town Beach Drainage Updat**e

Maureen Cranson asked to have this item moved to the next meeting. Paul Cathcart objected, stating that Karen Packard is interested in a landscape design.

Ms Cranson said she will touch base with Matt Marro and Barbara Roberti and will have an answer for the next meeting.

**Nuisance Property By-Law**

Mike Pineo reiterated that Sterling’s current by-laws have no authority attached to them. He mentioned that other towns have by-laws regarding nuisance properties. We might base ours on theirs. Paul Cathcart agreed.

Domenica Tatasciore stated that our by-laws are concerned with noise. They are for the town’s sub-division only.

Maureen Cranson stressed that the process should include the Fire, Constable and Health Departments and that the by-law should state this. Paul Cathcart agreed but added that there should be a focal point and suggested the Zoning Enforcement Officer, Sarah Culgin.

Chairman Patacchiola said that the role of the EDC is to support the by-laws as well as their impact.

Ms, Cranson will put this on the Select Boards agenda, including who will be the focal point.

**Selectmen Meeting Update**

Maureen Cranson stated that the Board of Selectmen have not had a meeting for 3 weeks.

The biggest news is the recruitment of a new Town Administrator, Kelly Hebert, who is in attendance at this meeting.

**Adjournment of Meeting**

Maureen Cranson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chairman Patacchiola seconded. All were in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a. m.

The next EDC meeting date is January 25, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara O’Connor, Recorder