

Economic Development Committee
January 22, 2024
Butterick Building, 1 Park Street, Room 205
Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Chairman James Patacchiola.

Present: James Patacchiola, Richard Maki, Rosanne Mapp, Mark Stoeve, Paul Cathcart

Also Present: William Caldwell (Town Administrator), Stephen Wallace (Town Planner)

Minutes of the November meeting were approved. (Rosanne Mapp abstained from voting since she did not attend the November meeting). No meeting was held in December.

Treasurer's Report. Half way through the fiscal year, the EDC has $\frac{2}{3}$ of its budget remaining. Dick Maki moved to approve payment of \$1080 for advertising in the upcoming issue of the Johnny Appleseed Visitors Guide; Jim Patacchiola seconded. Unanimous approval.

Town Administrator's Update. We have preliminary plans for downtown drainage and stormwater; one water main will be used for downtown, which will save money. Everything is contingent on funding. Grants will be submitted in May and awards will be made next Fall. Work can begin in summer, 2025.

Town Planner Update. Town is beginning to update and modernize the zoning bylaw. The Planning Board will be working on the commercial/industrial aspects of the zoning bylaw, which is the focus for this year

Two public forums will be held in March at the old town hall:

- (1) Wednesday, March 6th at 6:30 pm, and
- (2) Saturday, March 9th at 9am.

These will be aimed at ascertaining public preferences for economic development in the performance district. The forums will cover the importance and benefits of economic development and stress the fact that commercial/industrial development is a "tax winner." Every dollar generated in commercial/industrial taxes only costs the town 26 cents in services.

Stephen previewed his presentation for the public forum

The performance district has about 30 acres of land for development – a total of 22 parcels. New industries moving into a town look for highway access (Sterling has), municipal water and sewers (Sterling has water, but this will be a consideration depending upon the type of business moving in), parcels of land 20 acres or more (there is only one available parcel of land in the performance district this size). Therefore, the performance district is not suitable for large scale industrial use. 38% of Sterling land is permanently protected; 93% is zoned for residential development; 7% is zoned for commercial/industrial development. Sterling allows residential development in commercial/industrial zones, unlike other towns. At the forum, people will be asked what they do/don't want in the performance district.

Stephen distributed a proposal from Lex Thomas for communicating upcoming economic development projects, including the Public Forums. Dick Maki moved to approve \$1600 for Lex Thomas' services; Jim Patacchiola seconded. Motion carried. A Facebook page has recently been approved and can also be used to get information out about the forums.

Stephen will need EDC members to supply refreshments for the forums. Committee members are also asked to attend. Mark Stoeve moved that \$200 be spent on refreshments, Jim Patacchiola seconded. Motion approved.

Next meeting will be held on 2/26. Meeting adjourned at 10:45.

Submitted by Melissa Chalmers, recorder