**Economic Development Committee**



Butterick Building, 1 Park Street, Room 205

**ZOOM Meeting due to COVID-19**

October 26 2020

Time 8:30 AM

**Minutes**

**Present:** Chairman James Patacchiola, Maureen Cranson, Keith Cordial, Fred Aponte (Staff), Domenica Tatasciore (Staff)

**Absent:**  Paul Cathcart, Michael Pineo

**Non-Members present:**  Sarah Culgin (Nuisance Properties)

**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 August 24, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Maureen Cranson. The motion was unanimously accepted.

**Town Planner Update: Planning Board Meeting Presentation**

Domenica Tatasciore thanked Chairman Jim Patacchiola for attending the September 9, 2020 Planning Board meeting and voicing his support as representing the Economic Development Committee. She hoped that someone from the EDC will voice support again at the next Planning Board Meeting on November 17, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. Ms. Tatasciore will send out information on the meeting which involves changes to the Zoning By-laws and special permits.

**Town** **Activity Update**

Maureen Cranson reported that the town had been awarded a $66,000.00 DOT grant which has been used by the DPW to place Jersey barriers around town and make other improvements: one set of Jersey barriers was to support the “Safe Route to School” concept with a walk-way from Muddy Pond Road to Bean Road; another was the idea of a Street-eatery or “Streetery” downtown with 2 parking spaces; a third is an extension of the Library with tables in front. Ramps are more accessible now, more ADA compliant. There is also a bike-sharing lane to the Rail Trail.

The town was awarded a $40,000.00 grant for small businesses. An email was sent out to businesses and there was a great response.

Ms. Cranson received a letter from Mr. Christopher McDermott who is at MRPC. He has a survey which is a study of Covid-19 and its after effects on businesses. The survey is also on his web site. The consensus is that towns have to be proactive. Ms. Cranson and Mr. Patacchiola both agreed that we should find an email list of all of the town’s businesses and contact them. Domenica Tatasciore located one and sent the survey out to them.

**1835 Building Project**

Maureen Cranson stated that the flooring for the 1835 Building is done. Emergency lighting is needed before people can go in. The sprinklers are done. In the next few weeks, there should be a Rental Plan in place for occupancy.

Chairman Jim Patacchiola asked if the cost of the flooring came in around the $10K that had been approved. Ms. Cranson was not sure as the final bill has not come in yet. She assured Mr. Patacchiola that it is close.

**Lex Thomas (LTC Planning)**

Chairman Jim Patacchiola mentioned that he had 5 packages of brochures that Lex Thomas had designed and had printed. He estimated that Ms. Thomas had printed 100 brochures. Chairman Patacchiola asked what should be done with them. Ms. Cranson said to bring them to the Town Hall to the downstairs shelving.

**Town Meeting**

Maureen Cranson, who is a member of the Board of Selectmen, expressed the concern that the anticipated December Town Meeting may not happen. If it does happen, it will have to be at the School and only 200 people will be allowed to attend, based on Covid-19 rules.

**Town Center Revitalization**

Before he retired, Ross Perry had made an effort to escalate the situation at Verizon but with no success. Paul Cathcart took the problem to a 2nd level at Verizon but again got nowhere. He plans to go even higher. Hopefully, by the November meeting, we will have an answer.

**Business Recognition Awards Program**

Keith Cordial reported that the Sterling Meetinghouse News (newspaper) will have its own set of awards for town businesses. He will reach out to Karen at the newspaper to discuss the differences between her plans and EDC’s. He will also continue working on the program with Paul Cathcart. Chairman Patacchiola said the EDC will talk more at the November meeting.

**Announcements**

Two people are still needed as members of the EDC. Maureen Cranson knows of someone and will get the name of the person to Chairman Patacchiola.

The Town Beach is closed.

Maureen Cranson announced that the town is close to hiring a new Town Administrator and speculated that a January 1st start date is probable.

**Nuisance Properties**

Sarah Culgin communicated to the EDC the work she has been doing regarding nuisance properties since she last met with the EDC. She had a meeting with Town Council who proposed that the fines assessed to residents for not following the town’s zoning laws be added to the resident’s tax bill. He also advised that she should elevate any such issues to the Municipal Hearings Office, which in Sterling’s case, may be the Town Administrator. There is the option of going to the District Court if she doesn’t hear anything from the resident.

Ms. Cranson stated that she didn’t believe the burden should all be on the Town Administrator’s shoulders but that the Zoning Board, the Board of Health and the Board of Selectmen should be part of the discussion. She also stressed that threatening to take someone’s house because of a tax lien for non-compliance should be avoided at all costs.

**Adjournment of Meeting**

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

The next EDC meeting date is November 30, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara O’Connor, Recorder