

Economic Development Committee
December 27, 2021

Butterick Building, 1 Park Street, Room 205

Minutes

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

Present: James Patacchiola, Maureen Cranson, Paul Cathcart, Rosanne Mapp, Richard Maki, Michael Pineo, Keith Cordial (via ZOOM)

Other Attendees: Scott Aponte, Art Aponte (Brothers Remodeling and Design Inc., of Gardner), Patty Page (Building Dept., Planning Board)

Past Meeting Minutes: Minutes of the November 22, 2021 meeting were approved

Sterling Inn: Scott and Art Aponte, who purchased the Inn at Auction on December 10th, attended the meeting to discuss the Inn's future. They are currently looking into what can be done with the building (e.g., can it be saved) and what's allowable for the property. They hope to develop for mixed use and are looking into purchasing/developing property across the street as well. Sterling residents are in favor of development right now, and there is much support for something new. Everything is on the table. The Inn could become the catalyst for downtown development, encouraging other downtown businesses to help revitalize the area.

Everyone agrees that it is important to maintain the agricultural nature of the Town and preserve its colonial history and status as a Historic District. The Apontes are looking into the availability of grants, the possibility of working with downtown landlords to improve existing business facades, and opportunities for coordinating with ongoing projects such as the improvement of the sidewalks.

Business Permitting Guide: Patty Page will meet with people at MRPC in early January to discuss the Business Planning Guide.

Town Planner Update: Once a Town Administrator has been hired, that person will participate in hiring the Town Planner.

Town Administrator Update: Paradigm has been hired to recruit the new Town Administrator. They have been meeting with Department Heads and Elected Boards to discuss what people need. Paradigm will handle all the advertising, etc. Everything. The process should move fairly quickly.

Sterling Business Development: The new coffee shop at 37 Main St.: The coffee shop is now scheduled to open in April. Issues with contractors and materials delayed the original November opening date.

Aquifer area re-zoning: Everything has gone through and been approved by the State

Town Center Revitalization: The Town has decided to go with the original contractors, Weston & Sampson, who did the initial drawings for Sterling in 2007 and 2019.

Business Recognition and Awards Program: Jim Patacchiola and Keith Cordial met with Village Pizza in December to present a plaque in recognition of the hard work they've done for the community. This was the second recognition award. The next award(s) will probably be given out in April. There was discussion around the need for more visibility when these presentations are made. Members suggested involving local newspapers, holding an outdoor award ceremony that will attract attention, something visible.

There was also discussion around the need for more visibility for the EDC in general. Residents tend to be unfamiliar with the work of the EDC. Some suggestions for getting information out included regular "EDC News" in the Meetinghouse News and on the Town's web page, mailings, use of the SMLD Newsletter, and use of the signboard in front of Town Hall.

Mass DOT Rt-12 Median Between the Traffic Circles: The town plans to re-seed the median with low-maintenance grass which the State will mow twice a year. Sterling officials will meet with the DPW Board and Mass DOT in January about financing to subsidize additional mowing, if needed.

Maureen Cranson moved to adjourn the meeting. Rosanne Mapp seconded. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 10:40.

The next EDC meeting is scheduled for **January 24th at 9:00 am in Room 205 of the Butterick Building**.

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Chalmers, Recorder.