

Economic Development Committee
August 28, 2023
Butterick Building, 1 Park Street, Sterling, Room 205

Minutes

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

Present: Jim Patacchiola, Paul Cathcart, Mark Stoeve, Dick Maki, Brian Kimball

Also Present: Steve Wallace (Town Planner), Bill Caldwell (Town Administrator)

Approved: Minutes of the July 2023 meeting

Agenda Item Discussions:

EDC Treasurer Report - Dick Maki: Dick presented an Excel worksheet detailing EDC funding and expenditures. \$16K represents this year's budget and combined with prior year unspent funding of \$7,399 totals \$23,399. An expense of \$2082 for signs brings the current balance to \$21,317.00. Town Planner, Steve Wallace added that there are two upcoming expenses: Within the next month the Chamber of Commerce will be billing EDC \$1,800 which represents our share of the Town Brochure cost. In the fall the C of C will be billing us approximately \$1,000 for our participation in the Winter/Spring guide.

Dick will continue to update the spreadsheet along with input from the Town Accountant, Fred Aponte.

Town Planner Update - Steve Wallace: Brochures have been distributed around town, i.e., town hall, library, Chocksett Inn, Chamber of Commerce, Senior Center, Johnny Appleseed Visitor Center, and local businesses and upcoming Sterling Fair. He will do another distribution in the Spring, and estimates he has about a 3year remaining supply of brochures.

Stephen discussed an "Options for Funding" handout. In one example, business owners would have to apply for the "Biz-M-Power Grant Program, a matching fund grant. Stephen would be available to assist in submitting the paperwork. The town would count the ARPA funds we plan to use for village center improvements as the match. The fund prioritizes minority owned businesses.

Stephen mentioned that the zoning department is working on a table of uses for the Performance Zone, and that he will be submitting an article on planning to the Meetinghouse News.

Town Administrator Update – Bill Caldwell: Work is in progress addressing drainage and the downtown water main area. This should be finished by the end of the calendar year. Maple Street sidewalks up to Bird Street are out to bid, pending funding. Eminent Domain documents are in progress. The Eminent Domain appraisals have been completed. Everyone agreed that it is necessary to complete "below ground" work before "above ground" work to avoid re-work. As of now, we do not have all the money needed to complete the EDC projects. Some ARPA funds have been saved, and by the first of the new year we should have a good idea of total costs (drainage, sidewalks, eminent domain, lighting).

Action Item: Jim P. will meet with Town Administrator to discuss the scope of EDC projects and funding sources as well as timing. Focus on drainage, lighting, and sidewalks.

Town Center Store Front Renovation Design – Paul Cathcart: The members reviewed a concept design of the downtown store front area. This design could be used to start a dialog with property owners and business operators, keeping in mind the design is at the concept stage. This is targeted for Spring start. Mark S. suggested presenting multiple options of design including cost estimates. Dick M. discussed his visit to downtown Concord and Newport RI. Buildings are a combination of brick, wood, awnings that do not match, however they are very well maintained and attractive. These are vibrant areas. Dick asked if we may be overacting with our owners as shown in the elaborate design drawings. Are we trying to accomplish too much, and perhaps there is a simpler approach. Paul C. agreed with Dick and gave highlights to his visit to Newburyport, MA. Paul emphasized the drawing is just a preliminary concept, a tool to be used to reach the final goal of revitalization.

Wayfinding Sign Selection and Location Priorities: Jim P. mentioned we need more clarity regarding signage. Some signs for parking have been implemented. Paul C. mentioned that parking signs are important as people do not know where to park downtown. However, not all signs are needed yet.

Mark S. pointed out that there has been an ad hoc approach to signage. We should step back and look at the total picture. Jim P. suggested “holding off” on signage. Dick M. cautioned we should be cognizant of the state mandated signage.

Approved Motion: Discuss selection of Wayfair signs for next meeting. Motion, Paul Cathcart, 2nd Mark Stoevers. Unanimous approval.

Miscellaneous: Dick M. gave an update on the beach progress. Bathroom renovations are complete. ADA ramps and tree removal work is pending. Perimeter parking lot trenching is pending; scope of project is dependent on the width, and depth of trenches. Preliminary cost completion at \$50k.

Paul C. brought up the aesthetic of excess electrical lines at the beachfront. According to Dick M., these are Verizon lines and there are no plans to make any changes.

Meeting Adjourned: Jim P. adjourned meeting at 11:00am.