

TOWN OF STOW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the March 26, 2015 Economic Development and Industrial Commission Meeting

Members Present: Tom Farnsworth, Andrew Bluestein, Mannie Afonso and Serena Howlett

Absent: Bob Collings, Richard Eckel and Kevin Whalen

Also Present: Selectman Jim Salvie

Tom Farnsworth called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm

Review of Meeting Minutes of 2.26.2015

Tom Farnsworth motioned to approve the minutes as amended.

Mannie Afonso seconded.

VOTED: (4-0) Unanimously in favor. (Tom Farnsworth, Serena Howlett, Mannie Afonso and Andrew Bluestein).

Open Meeting Law

Tom Farnsworth reminded members of the open meeting law distributed a one page overview of the Law.

Public Forum

Karen Kelleher advised that staff is happy to prepare some PowerPoint slides for the Public forum and suggested initial slides providing some background on the Commission to be used as talking points for the Chairman. It was also suggested a few slides outlining general themes taken from the proposed survey to be used to foster focused discussion amongst the breakout groups. Members agreed the PowerPoint would be helpful and agreed to the following themes:

- What are the most important challenges for business owners
- What attracted you to locate your business in Stow
- What are the challenges about doing business in Stow
- How was your experience in interacting with Town Boards and Committees
- Suggested recommendations

Selectman Salvie agreed to make the opening statements by how the Commission got started.

Tom Farnworth will then introduce Commission Members, explain the mission statement, advise that the website has been established, and explain the relationship with the Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Serena Howlett suggested that Dave Augusta, former Stow Business Association Chairman be invited to attend the Forum. Members agreed that Serena should contact him.

It was suggested that the forum attendees should be asked to introduce themselves and describe what their business is.

Members agreed that the forum should go no more than 1 ½ hours (7:00 pm to 8:30 pm).

Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce

Members discussed correspondence from Rich Eckel, where he suggested that the Commission meet with Sarah Cressy of the Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce before on March 31st before the Forum begins. Members said they are not available any earlier than 7:00 PM and suggested she be invited to the next Commission Meeting.

Survey

Members reviewed the revised draft survey, prepared by Rich Eckel. There was some discussion about the relationship with the Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce and the reasons why. It was agreed that, although the purpose should not be for confidentiality purposes (because the Survey is considered a public record), it would be helpful for the Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce to administer the survey. It was also noted that the Economic Development and Industrial Commission and Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce have common goals and that it should be clear that the Commission is not paying for services provided by the Chamber of Commerce.

Members agreed that there is no need for a cover letter and the introduction in the survey and agreed to remove the introduction. It was also agreed that the Town Seal and Economic Development and Industrial Commission should be prominent in the letter head with the Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce logo being secondary.

It was agreed that the survey should be clear to those completing that it is considered a public record and therefore providing contact information is optional. The survey should also include a statement that if business owners would like their business to be noted on the Town website they may forward the contact/website information to the Commission under a separate email.

Mannie Afonso motioned to have Karen Kelleher update the survey as follows:

- Remove the opening paragraph
- Revise cover letter
- Move the space for contact information to the end.
- Question 3 - As most will check the box for “other” sufficient space should be provided for comments.
- Question 2 - Keep the question as agreed upon at the last meeting
- Include a statement that contact information for the Town’s website may be forwarded by separate email.
- Minor typographic and grammar corrections.

Andrew Bluestein seconded.

VOTED: (4-0) Unanimously in favor. (Tom Farnsworth, Mannie Afonso, Serena Howlett and Andrew Bluestein).

Karen Kelleher will revise the survey for the Chairman’s review prior to printing for the March 31 forum.

Tom Farnsworth motioned to determine that the cover letter and survey, as amended by the Committee this evening be considered the final draft to be used at the forum.

Andrew Bluestein seconded.

VOTED: (4-0) Unanimously in favor. (Tom Farnsworth, Mannie Afonso, Serena Howlett and Andrew Bluestein).

Informational table at SpringFest

Members agreed to have a table at SpringFest on May 16 with information on the Committee’s goals.

Design Guidelines

It was suggested that Stow consider design guidelines for new buildings in order for the business district to be a more inviting place. Karen Kelleher reported that the Planning Department is working on design guidelines

News

Members noted ongoing business activities:

- Snap Dragons, in the Stow Shopping Plaza is shutting down and there has been talk about a Sports Bar to be located in that space.
- Mannie noted that it was suggested that Lower Village Property owner Steve Steinberg should be invited to meet with the Commission and because he is a tenant he should sit out of the meeting. Members agreed to that Steve Steinberg should be invited but Mannie should also take part in the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Kelleher