

TOWN OF STOW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the October 3, 2019 Economic Development and Industrial Commission Meeting

Members Present: Kevin Whalen, Tom Farnsworth, Bob Collings, Serena Howlett, Jen Gero

Absent: Andrew Bluestein

Kevin Whalen called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Discussion of Meeting Minutes

Minutes of July 25, 2019

Tom Farnsworth moved to approve the minutes as written.

Bob Collings Seconded.

VOTED: (5-0) Unanimously in favor (Kevin Whalen, Bob Collings, Tom Farnsworth, Serena Howlett, Jen Gero- Yea).

Public Input

None.

Member Updates

None.

Planner's Updates

Lower Village Traffic Safety Improvement Project

Jesse Steadman said the Lower Village construction work is on schedule, and the road should be paved in the coming weeks.

Correspondence from Marble Hill Farm Stand

Jesse Steadman said The Prettiest Home, a seasonal pop-up shop selling home décor, would like to locate at the Marble Hill farm stand, as they did last year before being notified that the use is not allowed through zoning. Members of the EDIC agreed this business fulfills a need in Stow and that a seasonal pop-up at the farm stand site is an appropriate use for a culturally sensitive structure. Serena Howlett stated that the EDIC should support The Prettiest Home's continued business at the former Marble Hill Farm Stand, as she feels the business could be entitled to a Special Permit through Section 3.2.3.5 of the Zoning Bylaw. The EDIC agreed on their support of the business and intent to write a letter to the Planning Board stating such.

Debrief of Job Fair

The EDIC discussed the Job Fair held on May 16, 2019 and identified strategies to increase participation. Suggestions included the following:

- Invite the Bolton Economic Development Commission to a meeting to discuss whether they have interest in cohosting next year's job fair;
- Ensure participation from farms and orchards. This may relate to altering the date of the job fair to a time in April when farms are hiring for seasonal employment;

- Confirm several businesses ahead of publicly advertising, in order to include these anchors on outreach;
- Request that participating businesses stay for full duration of the job fair, as job seekers were arriving close to the end of the event without many businesses to visit;
- Gather success stories from the previous job fair to use in advertising;
- Combine the Job Fair with a Business Meet & Greet beforehand, or possibly a business skill swap;
- Invite the Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce to reserve a table;
- Purchase a half page ad in the Stow/ Bolton Independent.

Annual Work Plan

Staff provided the EDIC with a memo of suggested tasks to pursue in the coming year. The EDIC reviewed the list and agreed to prioritize the following items:

1. Advance public water supply efforts in Lower Village
2. Organize a Job Fair
3. Coordinate with Local Economic Development Commissions

The EDIC agreed to invite members of Bolton's EDIC to a future meeting to discuss strategies for economic development in towns without public water supplies and the potential for collaborating on a Job Fair.

Current Zoning and Permitting Process for Businesses

Serena Howlett noted her interest in the progress of the construction and leasing of 271 Great Road, the former Stow Bed & Breakfast. The property has a Special Permit to operate a café and retail space on the first floor of the building and to renovate a residence on the second floor. Jesse Steadman said the business is allowed to operate in the residential district through Section 3.2.3.5 of the Zoning Bylaw, as 271 Great Road is a historic structure. The owners are leasing both the café and residence, either together or separately. Jesse Steadman said staff have discussed the property and its zoning with potential renters, including a food truck looking to operate a brick and mortar restaurant.

The EDIC discussed the Special Permit process underway at 108-118 Great Road agreed they would like to invite John Cramer, the owner, to a future meeting to discuss his vision for the properties.

Vacant Position and Commission Membership

The EDIC discussed whether to remain as a 7 member commission, as 4 members are needed for a quorum. The EDIC decided not to request to have the commission lowered to 5 members, as they appreciate having at least 4 perspectives at each meeting. Regarding the vacant position, the EDIC agreed they would be interested to see if John Cramer is interested in joining.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Valerie Oorthuys