

TOWN OF STOW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the March 11, 2021 Economic Development & Industrial Commission Meeting

Members present: Serena Howlett, Thomas Farnsworth, Bob Collings, David Elkins, Jen Gero

David Elkins called the meeting to order at 5:30

Discussion with Denise Dembkoski – Town Administrator

Lower Village Public Water

David Elkins and Jen Gero reported favorable responses from business owners in the Lower Village when asked about their interest in partnering with the Town to develop a public water supply for the district. The Commission asked the Town Administrator for her thoughts on the Town's role in helping to plan, construct, and manage such a system. Denise Dembkoski responded that she is hesitant to put too much support behind a system that would only serve a small part of the Town and is concerned that future developments would demand public water provision after a precedent had been set in the Lower Village area. Denise Dembkoski further explained that the Town would be amenable to paying for capital expenses if there were a private entity in place to handle management and maintenance of such a system.

Jen Gero said that a public water supply for the Lower Village would serve the public interest by allowing commercial development better adapted to consumer preferences. Serena Howlett said that residents would not view public water supply for the Lower Village as preferential treatment for the business community and would support public expenditure to ensure a vibrant commercial district. Bob Collings said that Department of Environmental Protection standards make it infeasible for business to expand their well capacity given spatial constraints, and that a larger public system is the only available option.

Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski concluded the discussion by informing the Commission that she would be willing to support the costs of engineering and feasibility studies for a public water system for Lower Village if there were a firm commitment from the business community.

Signage Bylaw

The Commission reported recent complaints regarding enforcement of what they consider an overly restrictive signage bylaw. Denise Dembkoski agreed that the signage bylaw was due for an update and that the Commission should draft a memo to the Planning Board outlining their proposed changes to the bylaw. Denise Dembkoski ended the discussion by explaining that current bylaws must continue to be enforced as long as they remain on the books.

Business Directory Discussion

David Elkins and Jen Gero reported that business owners they have spoke to about an updated business directory have been appreciative of the efforts and are willing to be involved. The Commission discussed making the updated directory part of a larger "Stay in Stow" marketing campaign. The Commission deliberated how to fund outreach to businesses to participate in such a campaign and agreed that direct

outreach to all businesses in Stow would be overly time consuming. The Commission decided that the positive feedback they had received for the idea so far suggests that an advertisement in the Stow Independent for the campaign would attract wider interest from the Stow business community. Jen Gero suggested that the Commission further refine a marketing plan for the Stay in Stow campaign ahead of publishing any advertisement.

Other Business

David reported that he spoke to an assistant of representative Kate Hogan, who would be willing to attend a future meeting of the Commission. Town Planner Jesse Steadman suggested that the Commission seek clarification on provisions of the recently passed economic development bill. Bob Collings suggested that the Commission inquire with Kate Hogan about state support for a water system feasibility study or engineering work.

Bob Collings inquired about the possibility of having an upcoming meeting in person. Jesse Steadman reported that town hall is expected to reopen either July or September, following most employees being vaccinated. Bob Collings suggests that the Commission meet using a hybrid in-person/virtual format in the near future.

Bob Collings moved to adjourn.

Jen Gero seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Jen Gero -**Yea**; Thomas Farnsworth -**Yea**; David Elkins -**Yea**; Serena Howlett -**Yea**, Bob Collings -**Yea**.