

TOWN OF STOW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the May 6, 2021 Economic Development & Industrial Commission Meeting

Members Present: Thomas Farnsworth, Kevin Whalen, Bob Collings, David Elkins

Kevin Whalen called the meeting to order at 5:30

Bob Collings moved to approve the minutes of the April 8, 2021 meeting as written

Thomas Farnsworth seconded

Roll Call: Kevin Whalen -**Yea**; Thomas Farnsworth -**Yea**; Bob Collings -**Yea**; David Elkins -**Yea**

Member updates

Kevin Whalen asked the Commission for suggestions regarding structuring and scheduling of meetings going forward. Tom Farnsworth said that he appreciates the efforts of Planning Staff and that they are important for bringing information before the EDIC from other committees and the Town government. Bob Collings said that meetings of the EDIC being cancelled due to insufficient notice is unacceptable.

Kevin Whalen said that trying to stack up the meetings weekly was difficult for the Commission to schedule around, and that if there is no quorum the meeting should be moved to two weeks in the future. Kevin Whalen said that the meetings should be scheduled more regularly on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month. Town Planner Jesse Steadman said that he and Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan would schedule out the 2nd and 4th Thursdays for the EDIC around 3 months in advance.

Jesse Steadman asked the Commission when they typically want to receive agendas for Thursday meetings. Kevin Whalen said that agendas should go out on the Monday the week of the meeting. Jesse Steadman said he and Malcolm Ragan would aim to distribute the agenda by 3pm on those Mondays. Bob Collings suggested that staff verify that all members can attend upcoming meetings on those days as well.

Member David Elkins said that he had sold his house and was preparing to move soon. David Elkins commented that the Town has clearly changed in recent years and that it would be even more important to make upgrades to the water system in Lower Village to adapt to a changing economy. David Elkins said that greater pressure should be placed on legislators to allocate funds for water service.

Jesse Steadman said that U.S. Representative Lori Trahan's office was presently focused on getting funds for transportation projects, but that the EDIC would be wise to find funds for local infrastructure improvements through the other levels of government.

Kevin Whalen commented that members and staff should be cautious with their use of reply all in email to stay compliant with open meeting laws. Jesse Steadman said that scheduling issues are fair game to discuss this way, but that members should be cautious about discussing any real content. Bob Collings asked for clarification about work that members could do over email together, Jesse Steadman responded that coordinating work like data collection and tabulation between a subset of members is fine. Jesse

Steadman said that the EDIC should be cautious about substantive discussions had as a group outside of regularly scheduled and noticed meetings.

David Elkins said his last meeting would be on May 20 to speak with State Rep. Kate Hogan.

Preparation for Kate Hogan Legislative Update

Kevin Whalen asked if there would need to be a prepared list of questions for Kate Hogan. Jesse Steadman said that there would not have to be specific questions prepared, but at least some general topics. Jesse Steadman said he wanted to add in some questions about recent economic development bond bill and if there was any funding in there for Stow to tap into. Jesse Steadman also suggested asking Rep Hogan if the Edge Community Commission's recommendations to the legislature had any possibility of moving forward again.

Jesse Steadman said that Kate Hogan was aware of the issues surrounding a public water supply for Lower Village. Jesse Steadman commented that much of the town government's position on such a water supply had been shaped by the tenure of the previous town administrator, and that new opportunities may be available for the project with a new Town Administrator.

Jesse Steadman said that the questions previously drafted during a prior meeting would be included in the Monday disbursal of the agenda prior to the next meeting.

Business Brochure and Directory Discussion

Jen Gero was unable to attend, and David Elkins said he had paused on directly reaching out to businesses for inclusion in the directory so he could move.

Bob Collings suggested that the upcoming press release include a link to a form to collect information from businesses automatically. Jesse Steadman suggested that a landing page be created for the project on the EDIC homepage. Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan said he would create a form and landing page for the directory effort.

Malcolm Ragan asked the EDIC if they would like to see the final draft at the next meeting or if they would accept a version incorporating earlier suggestions to be sent sooner. Kevin Whalen said Malcolm Ragan could send him the draft for final sign off.

Other Business

Jesse Steadman said EDIC members should think of anyone that would be interested in filling upcoming vacancies on the EDIC. Jesse Steadman said that the new policy of the Town was to discuss a possible appointment with the Town Administrator. Jesse Steadman suggested that a prospective member attend a meeting of the EDIC first. Jesse Steadman said that the Town administrator has significant authority over who is ultimately appointed to fill vacancies on the EDIC.

Bob Collings said that various boards and committees should have some say over who is appointed. Jesse Steadman said that the policy is meant to be a check on Board's being overly insular, although he is not convinced that this had been an issue in the past.

Kevin Whalen said that residents should be interested in amending the Town Charter to check this authority.

Bose Property Sale

Jesse Steadman said that the stage at which the EDIC could be involved in Bose sale was when the bidders came before the Planning Board. Jesse Steadman updated the EDIC about the nature of the proposals. Jesse Steadman said the proposed buildout was similarly intense as what Bose was already approved for. Jesse Steadman said that apparent bidder had explored a larger distribution use for the site but had shifted their proposal more towards light manufacturing and R&D.

David Elkins commented that no towns in the region seemed at all interested in hosting a distribution warehouse.

Bob Collings asked the implications of the town missing out on the tax revenue of Bose. Jesse Steadman responded that it is a small number in comparison to the tax income from various residential developments. Jesse Steadman said there was a larger philosophical issue of losing the largest employer in town, and that the transit through town to access an employer had secondary economic benefits.

Stow Acres

Bob Collings asked about the status of the Stow Acres project. Jesse Steadman said that there would be another public forum to present some of the newer details. Kevin Whalen asked how quickly the developer could move on that if they get approval. Jesse Steadman said it was hard to say at this still early stage. Jesse Steadman said that the conservation restriction payment would be placed in escrow until the housing component on the North Course was executed.

Respectfully submitted,

Malcolm Ragan