

TOWN OF STOW  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the May 20, 2021 Economic Development & Industrial Commission Meeting

Members Present: Thomas Farnsworth, Kevin Whalen, Bob Collings, David Elkins, Serena Howlett,  
Jen Gero

Kevin Whalen called the meeting to order at 5:30

*Bob Collings moved to approve the minutes of the May 6, 2021 meeting as amended*  
*Kevin Whalen seconded*

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

**Member updates**

Kevin Whalen informed the EDIC that Representative Kate Hogan could not attend the meeting. Kevin Whalen said that the commission could schedule an additional meeting for June 3. The EDIC agreed to schedule an additional meeting for June 3 at the usual 5:30pm.

Serena Howlett requested that the EDIC extend another invitation to Linear Retail and reach out to someone other than the previous contact. Kevin Whalen requested that Town Planner Jesse Steadman reach out to a different contact at Linear Retail.

**Questions for Representative Kate Hogan**

Kevin Whalen suggested that the EDIC revisit the questions for Representative Kate Hogan. Bob Collings asked Jesse Steadman to clarify the content of the new technologies referenced in the water infrastructure questions. Jesse Steadman said he is expecting Kate Hogan to provide more detail.

**Business Brochure**

Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan informed the EDIC that the press release for the Business Directory had been received by the Stow Independent. Bob Collings suggested a readability edit for the press release, Jesse Steadman said he would attempt to reach out to the editor before anything is printed.

**Other Business**

*Bose*

Jesse Steadman informed the EDIC that the current site contains 403,000 sf of office/R&D space and that Bose had been permitted to construct an additional 415,000 sf of office space in 2003. Malcolm Ragan updated the EDIC about what had been permitted in the past the limited construction that has been completed since permitting.

Bob Collings asked what the reasoning for Bose closing was. Jesse Steadman said that Bose long struggled to attract a workforce to the site, and that the closure is part of a broader trend in office park closures along I-495. Serena Howlett asked if Bose knew when they would abandon the site. Jesse Steadman said that the Planning Department has heard nothing more specific than 2022. Jesse Steadman said that the sale appears to be quieter, off market and is not being publicly advertised. Jen Gero asked about the sale price, Jesse Steadman said that the property is assessed at \$14 million. Jen Gero asked if it would be possible to develop agriculture on the site. Jesse Steadman said it would be possible, as agricultural uses are permitted in all zoning districts.

### *Planning Board Liaison*

Jesse Steadman suggested that the EDIC designate a liaison to attend Planning Board meetings that involve local businesses. Jesse Steadman said that an EDIC member could keep the rest of the Commission informed about local business zoning issues and act as an advocate for businesses. Kevin Whalen said that he supported the idea and requested that the Planning Board inform the EDIC about any relevant meetings and hearings as they come before the Planning Board.

Bob Collings asked for an update on Stow House of Pizza. Jesse Steadman listed some of the issues that have complicated that process and mentioned that the Planning Board would be issuing a decision soon. Jesse Steadman said that the business had been permitted for an addition in the past but had not followed through, leading to the expiration of a previously approved Special Permit.

Bob Collings asked about the issues involved in the Nan's Market public hearings and forthcoming Planning Board decision. Jesse Steadman said that abutters have raised an issue of noise pollution. The EDIC noted that this was a case where business owners could have used an advocate in the public hearing process. Jesse Steadman said the idea of the liaison was not as much to stack the deck but to provide the Planning Board with a different perspective than the Board might otherwise hear.

Jen Gero said that the EDIC members could take turns attending Board meetings to limit the workload placed on any one member. Jesse Steadman said that Planning Board meetings involve businesses on average once per quarter.

Serena Howlett said that the EDIC would have to meet with applicants ahead of Planning Board meetings and public hearings ahead of time to be most effective. Jesse Steadman provided an overview of the public hearing process and outlined the points at which the EDIC could become involved.

Thomas Farnsworth said that the EDIC would need to appear as members of the public at hearings. Bob Collings said that the EDIC would reach out once a hearing was noticed and offer assistance or support at that point. Serena asked if the EDIC could review permit proposals as they came into the Planning Board. Bob Collings said that reviewing the proposal at a meeting would allow the entire EDIC to put its support behind a project. Serena Howlett said it puts the EDIC in the position of possibly rejecting a proposal before it reached the Planning Board, and that this didn't seem like a fair process. Jesse Steadman responded that the Board would be interested in hearing the opinion of the EDIC before any decision, and that this would not be an unfair influence on a permitting process.

Serena Howlett asked if the EDIC held a formal advisory role. Jesse Steadman responded that it does, and that it is within its purview to advise other Town boards.

Jen Gero said that John Cramer is an example of a business owner the EDIC could assist. Jen Gero asked what had delayed construction at 108-118 Great Road. Jesse Steadman said that the project had cleared the Planning Board and that he was unsure what was delaying construction. Kevin Whalen said that he had heard John Cramer was possibly waiting to have tenants in hand before commencing construction.

Jen Gero said she would follow up with John Cramer. Serena Howlett asked if the opening of Nan's Market had impacted the construction or market appeal of the site. EDIC members commented that multiple dining locations was generally a draw for a town and doubted that this was the reason.

#### *Minuteman Airfield*

Jen Gero asked if Minuteman Airfield is still for sale. Bob Collings said that the airfield was restricted in its future uses because it had accepted some Federal funds. Serena Howlett wondered if the closure of Cisco in Boxboro would affect the usage of Minuteman Airfield.

#### *EDIC Ongoing Business Checklist*

Serena Howlett addressed the idea to have an ongoing checklist of business for the EDIC, and members supported the idea. Bob Collings said some things drop off the radar when things get slow, but that having a list of open items would help the EDIC stay organized. Jesse Steadman said he would update the agenda for the next meeting to reflect doing this.

Malcolm Ragan said he would follow up with an email to the EDIC about subscribing to the Planning Board agendas, so that they may follow things as well. Bob Collings suggested that Planning staff alert Kevin Whalen when relevant meetings come before the Planning Board.

Kevin Whalen commented that part of being more involved in these processes is that it will allow the EDIC to build relationships with business owners. Serena Howlett said that the area of Nan's should be rezoned to make it more amenable to businesses. Kevin Whalen commented that traffic issues were likely going to worsen.

Thomas Farnsworth suggested that the EDIC draft a letter of support for Nan's to install a new streetlight across from the vehicle entrance. Bob Collings suggested that the letter also include a statement in support of the outdoor dining Special Permit currently under consideration by the Planning Board. Jesse Steadman reminded the EDIC that the Public Hearing for Nan's has been closed and that the Planning Board could no longer accept testimony into the record for the decision.

*Serena Howlett moved that the EDIC draft a letter to the Board of Selectmen in support of a new streetlight across from Nan's and in support of the proposed outdoor dining*  
*Kevin Whalen seconded*

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Malcolm Ragan