

TOWN OF STOW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the January 13, 2022 Economic Development & Industrial Commission Meeting

Members Present: Thomas Farnsworth, Bob Collings, Serena Howlett, Jen Gero, Mary Bradt-Mintz,
Kevin Whalen

Thomas Farnsworth called the meeting to order at 5:30

Previous Meeting Minutes

*Tom Farnsworth moved to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2021 meeting as amended
Bob Collings seconded*

Roll Call Vote: Thomas Farnsworth -**Yea**; Bob Collings -**Yea**; Jen Gero, -**Yea**; Serena Howlett -**Yea**;
Mary Bradt-Mintz -**Yea**

*Tom Farnsworth moved to approve the minutes of December 9, 2021 as amended
Mary Bradt-Mintz Seconded*

Roll Call Vote: Thomas Farnsworth -**Yea**; Bob Collings -**Yea**; Jen Gero, -**Yea**; Serena Howlett -**Yea**;
Mary Bradt-Mintz -**Yea**

Member updates

Tom Farnsworth addressed the recent resignation of Andrew Bluestein. Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan said that the Town Clerk has been notified of the resignation, and the Select Board has been provided language for a vacancy posting. Malcolm Ragan said anyone appointed to the vacancy will serve out the rest of Andrew Bluestein's term. The EDIC requested staff notify area businesses of the vacancy on the commission.

Jen Gero expressed appreciation that Andrew Bluestein provided meeting space at his business free of charge to many local groups in the past. Tom Farnsworth said he will work with Staff to draft a short letter of thanks.

*Serena Howlett moved to send a letter of appreciation to Andrew Bluestein
Jen Gero seconded*

Roll Call Vote: Thomas Farnsworth -**Yea**; Bob Collings -**Yea**; Jen Gero, -**Yea**; Serena Howlett -**Yea**;
Mary Bradt-Mintz -**Yea**

Bob Collings provided updates on the Green Advisory Committee (GAC). Bob Collings said the GAC is continuing discussions with Hudson Light & Power about reducing greenhouse emissions from buildings in Stow and green energy generation. Bob Collings said the GAC has been discussing the costs of hiring a consultant to assist with furthering green energy policies. Jen Gero asked if the GAC has any vacancies.

Bob Collings said the committee is fully appointed, but membership could always be expanded to include additional full members and/or associate members.

FY2023 Budget

Jesse Steadman said he previously reported an incorrect balance in the EDIC account. Jesse Steadman reported that the Commission has a balance of \$5,865. Jesse Steadman said he has been advised by the Town Administrator that the Select Board will be hesitant to approve a new budget request until some of the existing balance is expended. Jesse Steadman said the EDIC should consider ways to spend some of the current balance on previous budget priorities.

Serena Howlett asked about progress made on a previous business brochure project by Jen Gero and former member David Elkins. Jen Gero said the project had not moved in a while, and she will send a follow up email to the Commission detailing the work that was previously completed.

The EDIC briefly discussed some water issues in Lower Village. Jesse Steadman said that any feasibility study will need to consider the capacity of nearby water supplies. The Commission discussed issues with the water supply at the Stow shopping plaza.

Jesse Steadman said the Town Administrator did not think the EDIC's request for a Town Meeting warrant article is necessary to fund the water supply feasibility study, and the Select Board would like to apply federal ARPA funds to the project. Jesse Steadman said the Select Board has released guidelines for committees to request allocation of Town ARPA funds. Jesse Steadman said the expected amount should not require a full public bid process. Jesse Steadman said he will put out a request for quotes to several engineering firms that have done similar work in the past.

Resident Mark Forgues inquired about the expected scope of the feasibility study. Jesse Steadman said that the Town will consider the feasibility to use parcels at Heritage Lane and Red Acre Road for water supplies. Jesse Steadman clarified that the initial feasibility study will examine questions prior to proper hydrological study and focus more on transmission infrastructure and running costs benchmarks. Jesse Steadman said the town will move the project further forward following a positive result from the feasibility study.

Bob Collings suggested that the EDIC request a budget item to cover an initial sign bylaw audit. Bob Collings suggested that the EDIC reach out to consultants for fee proposals, likely in the range of \$20-30k. Tom Farnsworth said that no town committee appears well-equipped to audit or rewrite the signage bylaws. Serena Howlett spoke in favor of soliciting quotes from planning and consultant firms for a sign audit/review. Jesse Steadman suggested staff put together a proposed scope of work and receive an estimate on that work from several firms. Jesse Steadman said the request could be funded by a Town Meeting article submitted by the EDIC.

Resident Mark Forgues expressed concern about outsourcing the task of sign bylaw rewrites to an outside firm that is not attuned to local needs. Tom Farnsworth said that anything written for the Town will require approval of related boards and a Town Meeting. Bob Collings said that the scope of work will include interactions with Town officials and members of the public, and that any product will have input from the EDIC and other boards.

Planning staff agreed to assemble a basic scope of work for the following meeting, to be approved by the EDIC at a later meeting in February. Bob Collings requested that staff reach out to firms for recommendations while compiling a draft scope of work.

Lower Village Beautification – Telephone Pole Banner Replacement

Staff updated the EDIC about the unfavorable response from Hudson Light and Power on the proposal to reinstall banners in Lower Village. Tom Farnsworth asked for additional ideas for Lower Village beautification. Jesse Steadman said the Lower Village Revitalization Committee (LVRC) member Jon Bransfield had inquired about some additional landscaping plans for the area. Jesse Steadman suggested the EDIC consider helping fund any landscaping improvements. Jesse Steadman said he will provide contact info for John Bransfield to the chair of the EDIC.

Jen Gero asked if the Lower Village Revitalization committee will meet soon. Jesse Steadman said Planning Staff are working on bylaw updates and will provide those to the LVRC and the Planning Board.

Master Plan Update

Jesse Steadman said the Planning Board is discussing the next Master Plan update process, and preparing recommendations to the Select Board before the Master Plan committee is convened. Jesse Steadman said the EDIC should begin considering how they want to engage with the Master Plan process. Bob Collings asked how the EDIC can gain visibility during the Master Plan process to emphasize economic development issues.

Ongoing Business

Planning staff provided updates on recent land use permitting to the Commission.

Jesse Steadman said he is working a draft farmstand overlay bylaw, which he will send to the EDIC and Planning Board on completion. Jesse Steadman said the Planning Board is conceptualizing a potential overlay district to better allow uses that are somewhat in between agriculture and housing/landscaper yards.

The EDIC discussed making an introduction to the project team of Masters Academy at a later date. Jen Gero requested contact information for the project team.

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan