

TOWN OF STOW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the January 27, 2022 Economic Development & Industrial Commission Meeting

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

Thomas Farnsworth called the meeting to order at 5:30

Previous Meeting Minutes

*Mary Bradt-Mintz motioned to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2021 meeting as amended
Jen Gero seconded*

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

Public Input

Katie Fisher said the water system feasibility study for Lower Village should include the entirety of the district and the proposal should be clear about exactly which businesses are expected to be served. Katie Fisher said previous well capacity studies have been completed at the Red Acre Road property. Katie Fisher said there have been similar capacity studies done for the Heritage Lane open space parcel. Katie Fisher said the service area should include residential parcels that abut the business district.

Chair Tom Farnsworth responded that the EDIC needs clear information about potential costs and challenges for different approaches before there can be serious discussions about the exact service area.

Member updates

Mary Bradt-Mintz said she had been corresponding with an executive from Linear Realty, who owns the Stow Shopping Plaza. Mary Bradt-Mintz asked the commission what topics they want to raise with Linear Realty. Tom Farnsworth said Linear Realty should be a party to any discussions about rezoning and redevelopment of Lower Village. Serena Howlett suggested that a representative of Linear Realty be appointed to the Lower Village Revitalization Subcommittee (LVRC). Town Planner Jesse Steadman said he will provide Mary Bradt-Mintz with some past correspondence to demonstrate concerns to Linear Realty that have been raised in the past. Jesse Steadman said he will review the charge of the LVRC to ensure that a representative of Linear could serve on the committee.

Minuteman Airfield Infrastructure Project Presentation – Don McPherson

Don McPherson provided a summary of the challenges faced by Minuteman Airfield due to the Covid pandemic and outlined how activity levels are returning to pre-pandemic levels, leading to space constraints.

Don McPherson said Minuteman Airfield is seeking a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grant to construct a new administration building. Don McPherson said the project to add a new admin building has also expanded to include a new annex on an existing building and the addition of a 3-megawatt solar electricity array for use in creating hydrogen fuels.

Don McPherson said state representative Kate Hogan, state senator Jamie Eldridge, and the Stow Select Board have already offered support for the FAA grant. Don McPherson said he has also spoken with Bob Collings about support from the Green Advisory Committee (GAC). Don McPherson said EDIC members are welcome to tour the airfield and see firsthand the location of planned improvements on either February 28 or March 1.

Bob Collings asked the square footage of the proposed new building. Don McPherson said the project will include a new 6,000 sf building, a 6,000 sf annex onto an existing building, and necessary acreage for the 3-megawatt solar array. Don McPherson said the facility will be powered by the solar array, with hydrogen fuels created by the solar electricity powering the facility when no sunlight is available

Don McPherson said the MassDOT Aeronautics Division has supported the project but does not have grant funding available.

Bob Collings asked about the expected construction timing. Don McPherson said the goal is to secure grant funding for the design in FY 2023 with construction to begin in FY 2024.

Mary Bradt-Mintz said she is in favor of drafting a letter of support from the EDIC. Bob Collings said Don McPherson is not in an extreme hurry to obtain the support and suggested that the EDIC tour the airfield and hear greater detail about the hydrogen fuel storage plans. Jen Gero said she wants to understand the potential risks of hydrogen storage before voting to express support for the project. Serena Howlett said that expressing support for the project does not imply the commission fully understands and supports the hydrogen storage proposal. Serena Howlett noted there is already hydrogen being made at the airfield. Bob Collings said the current hydrogen production is at a small scale, and the larger scale proposed could require additional safety considerations. Tom Farnsworth said the Commission should learn more and accept the invite to tour the facility before drafting a letter of support.

Lower Village Water Feasibility Study – American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding

The Commission discussed a proposal from Weston & Sampson for a water feasibility study for Lower Village, which detailed an anticipated cost of \$21,500 for benchtop analysis of potential sources and \$30-70k for groundwater exploration. Bob Collings said that the proposal from Weston and Sampson contains some redundancies that can be addressed by providing previous studies. Bob Collings said that the study may want to focus more specifically on determining if there is adequate water at the potential supply parcels. Bob Collings said the scope of work should include some preliminary test wells.

Mark Forgues asked where funding for the study would come from. The Commission replied that the Town will allocate some American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the study. Mark Forgues said he does not believe the Heritage Lane property has sufficient capacity for a public water supply. Mark Forgues said there are previous studies for the parcel.

Tom Farnsworth said that the town is aware that there is some water available for potential use in the Lower Village district, be it from the Heritage Lane parcel or the Red Acre Road parcel. Tom Farnsworth said the purpose of the feasibility study is mostly to understand the challenges of developing the public private partnership, and less to do with the capacity of aquifers in the area. Mark Forgues said that further analysis of the heritage lane parcel is not necessary.

Jesse Steadman stated that there is no study that contains the information sought by this proposal. Jesse Steadman said answers are needed for questions about what it will cost the town to administer the distribution and the fee structuring. Jesse Steadman said that the town is interested in knowing whether administration is feasible before they spend significant money on test wells.

Bob Collings said that private businesses will not wish to invest money into the system if they do not have some assurance that adequate water is there. Bob Collings stated that he believes the test wells can be accomplished for less than the \$50-70k stated in the price quote, and said he received a quote from a drilling company for \$20-25k for the same work. Katie Fisher stated that test wells should be drilled before other questions about the potential water system are investigated.

Jesse Steadman suggested updating the scope of work to add an alternate deliverable for a test well, with clear ideas for costs for both primary tasks. Jesse Steadman said the full bid picture might be useful for the Select Board, who will have final say over the allocation of ARPA funds.

Jesse Steadman explained that the scope of work covers the costs of developing and distributing the system from either the Red Acre or Heritage Lane Parcel. Katie Fisher asked if the Town has approval from the state to use the Heritage Lane open space parcel for a public water supply. Jesse Steadman said approval was granted to the town by the state in 2014.

Jesse Steadman said that the funding request would come from ARPA funding and will not follow the Town Meeting funding schedule.

Jesse Steadman said he will draft a complete Request for Proposals following the Commission's comments. Jesse Steadman said the RFP will be discussed with other boards and committees over coming weeks before submission to the Select Board for ARPA funding.

Sign Bylaw Review – Preliminary Scope of Work

Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan said he drafted a preliminary scope of work for a later Request for Proposals for consulting services to review the Town of Stow Signage bylaws.

Bob Collings said the scope of work should include clear recommendations on how to distinguish and separately commercial vs non-commercial and on-site vs off-site signage. The Commission suggested ways to refine the proposal to reflect their goals of creating a clear, rational, and enforceable sign bylaw.

Mark Forgues asked for a preliminary estimate of the cost for consulting services. Jesse Steadman estimated the project would cost less than \$10k.

Katie Fisher asked if Town Counsel will review the proposal before it is submitted as a Warrant Article for Town Meeting. Jesse Steadman said it will be reviewed by counsel.

Other Business

Jen Gero requested contact info for the Masters Academy project team. Jesse Steadman said that on February 9th at 7pm there will be a presentation given to the Planning Board and Select Board detailing the overall permitting timeline for the Masters Academy, and suggested EDIC members attend.

Bob Collings asked if the commercial renting out of the future ice rinks will be allowed under zoning. Jesse Steadman said it will likely be allowed within a Special Permit and the development agreement between the Select Board and the Masters Academy.

Bob Collings motioned to adjourn
Jen Gero seconded

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan