

TOWN OF STOW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the June 22, 2017 Economic Development and Industrial Commission Meeting

Members Present: Kevin Whalen, Bob Collings, Tom Farnsworth, Serena Howlett

Absent: Andrew Bluestein

Kevin Whalen called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Meeting Minutes of May 25, 2017

Bob Collings moved to approve the minutes as written.

Tom Farnsworth Seconded.

VOTED: (4-0) Unanimously in favor (Kevin Whalen, Bob Collings, Tom Farnsworth, Serena Howlett- Yea).

Members' Updates

None.

Public Input

None.

Stow Job Fair

Jesse Steadman said that several businesses have responded to the call for participation in the job fair. Nancy's Airfield has expressed interest in participating.

Sign Bylaw Working Session

The EDIC took a Visual Preference Survey, originally created for Stow residents to complete as part of the Planning Board's Lower Village visioning work. The survey included over 30 examples of signs for members of the EDIC to rate, based on the visual appeal of the signage.

After completing the survey, the EDIC discussed how the consideration of design guidelines may be incorporated into a sign bylaw. The EDIC noted the difficulty of balancing preference for aesthetics with functionality. The EDIC agreed that signs with multiple businesses listed can easily become difficult to read from the road, especially when the signs lack uniformity. The EDIC noted preference for clear, simple signage, though also

discussed how this would be difficult to achieve in Stow's business district, as potential customers are driving by, rather than walking by the facades of stores.

Bob Collings reiterated a concern for the legality of including design guidelines in a sign bylaw.

Serena Howlett reiterated an interest in reviewing existing signage in Lower Village to see how they may or may not comply, to get a better understanding of how business owners may wish to use signs.

The EDIC reviewed each section of the current sign bylaw, highlighting where improvements need to be made.

Definitions

The EDIC felt that including a definitions section would add clarity to the bylaw. Most notable was the need for a definition of a sign, as flags, banners, pennants, or even balloons could be used as signage, though are not explicitly allowed in the current bylaw.

Purpose

The EDIC discussed Section 6.3.1, the regulation of signs in all districts. Serena Howlett suggested that in addition to noting specific concern for traffic, the bylaw should also list public health and safety.

Illumination

The EDIC agreed that open signs should be allowed to be illuminated internally.

Enforcement and Administration

The EDIC noted that the current bylaw references the Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Sign Officer, Building Inspector, Stow Agricultural Commission, Historical Commission, State Department of Public Works, and Outdoor Advertising Board. Scattering these enforcing bodies throughout the bylaw diminishes the readability of the bylaw, necessitating a more functional structure to the bylaw itself.

Bob Collings questioned whether the bylaw is legally allowed to include a price for the permits.

The EDIC discussed Section 6.3.2 and the enforcement of a new sign bylaw, and whether existing signs would be grandfathered in or found in violation of the bylaw. The EDIC discussed whether sign permits should require an annual renewal, which would have implications if a new sign bylaw passes with new design guidelines, as it would affect faster change.

Temporary Signage

Bob Collings noted that Public Safety Officers should have input on temporary event and directional signage, rather than requiring a specific number in the sign bylaw, as events range in size.

The EDIC agreed that the Temporary Signs section should include a rationale for whether the signs require a permit or not.

Exemptions

Serena Howlett said that the bylaw requires religious and charitable organizations to have a permit, though the Stow Historical Commission needs no permit to place historical markers or tablets.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Valerie Oorthuys