

**Town of Sharon
Economic Development Committee
Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**EDC Meeting Minutes
8/23/21**

EDC Members

Rob Maidman, Chair	Alan Lury
Jim Berish	Pasqualino Pannone
Eli Hauser absent	Xander Shapiro
Milena Virrankoski	Aleksander Tomic

Other Attendees

Elizabeth Ellis	Maria De La Fuente

Administration

- Chair Maidman called the EDC meeting to order at 7:00PM via ZOOM.

Minutes

- Mr. Shapiro moved to accept the minutes of 7/19/21 and Mr. Lury seconded the motion. The Committee voted 7-0-0 unanimously in favor.

Master Plan

- Ms. Ellis updated the Committee and said the wheels are in motion to connect Route 1 to sewer. She has created a draft agricultural guide/green tourism guide to be sent out.
- Mr. Maidman said the sewer connection was initiated by Sharon Gallery people in response to Costco. It takes master sewage pipe to Route 1 and connects to Walpole's system which connects to Foxborough's system and then to Mansfield where the treatment plant is. This connection will go a long way to solving issues and alleviate problem with sewage.
- Ms. De La Fuente said she created a map to see how long Route 1 is and it is 2.14 miles in Sharon. She is looking into three grants.
- Mr. Pannone said the business guide is published and moving forward with zoning recodification.
- Ms. De La Fuente said we are working to clean up the zoning bylaws and determine the vision for the future. The Town is hiring Marc Bobrowski to clean up/change the bylaws. It will be restructured in clear chapters. Make it more approachable.
- Mr. Pannone said the approval is twofold: a. clean up language/clarifications of current regulations and b. use the opportunity to improve zoning. This will requires two separate town meeting articles.
- Mr. Maidman said Mr. Bobrowski is an expert in Massachusetts. He has done this for over 100 communities. Some bylaws are out of date with what's taking place at the State House currently.

Solar

- Mr. Shapiro said there are 4 active/completed projects to include:
 - East – connection made and vegetation planted.
 - Heights – expecting permits and can start construction in a couple of months. It will come on line in 6-9 months.
 - Landfill Site – waiting for state authorities' approval. More infrastructure is needed.
 - High School – approved. Analysis being done. Process kicked off. Might be up and ready when new High School opens.

Sharon Gallery

- Both Jim and Rob are members of the Design Review Committee. Mr. Berish said he learned there was the opportunity to bring sewer along Route 1 small Sharon stretch.
- Design Review Committee did exhaustive review of site plan for Costco and building F which is a multi-tenant building. Review went well due to the diversity of knowledge on the committee.
- Drafted 12 page document of questions and comments, responses and recommendations to be given to ZBA.
- Mr. Pannone said he is ecstatic the project is moving forward and happy tax monies will be generated. He is unhappy about their architectural vision.
- Mr. Berish said he did some pushback on some design elements.
- Mr. Maidman said a pipe is being extended to Gavin's Pond Road so a higher load can be carried. This allows for possibility of more commercial development.
- Mr. Pannone said he sees the design as a parking lot with a building.
- All members agreed project is a win.
- Mr. Maidman said bear in mind we have a limited number of retail liquor licenses and one was given to the developer of 95 LLC. When Costco is approved, the license is being transferred to them. There cannot be any other entity that can sell liquor on that site.

Split Tax

- Mr. Maidman said we have talked about split tax a lot. As things stand he would like to hear the committee's thoughts.
- Mr. Lury said he was initially a proponent of the dual tax for individuals separate from business needs. To be structured/implemented during COVID times will still be creating business issues if being introduced in the current environment. It has to be made a pill that is palatable to businesses in our community. Many communities that border Sharon have split rate. The key is presentation, implementation and selling first to Select Board and business community.
- Ms. Virrankoski said we are trying to appeal to businesses to come to town. The appealing feature is taxes are low. Mr. Maidman said so you are saying taking substantive action would be premature.
- Ms. Ellis commented that perhaps this decision would be better made in the future as we make business districts more appealing.
- Mr. Tomic stated that this is not the cheapest place to live and we have to compete. We could test this out using low taxes as a selling point. Determine how changes would increase revenues with Costco coming. He is vehemently opposed to making changes now. He does not want to alienate the business community. He wants to promote business friendly Sharon.

- Mr. Shapiro said we are a great place to do business. We have been subsidizing businesses for decades and need to correct. Citizens are concerned for tax increases. He agrees not to be business unfriendly. Encourage Select Board to discuss.
- Mr. Pannone said we are just making recommendations to Select Board to consider to be put on a warrant for a future Town Meeting to be reviewed further.
- Costco can be built in 90 days once approved.
- Mr. Berish said phase this for 2023 tax year. We are 95% commercially developed. With Costco and the Sharon Gallery we will be 98% developed. He thinks the residents will like a split tax passed. People will be upset that their tax bill is as large as some commercial spaces.
- Mr. Maidman said formula used for tax evaluation. Most tax depends on valuation of what's inside. He is curious to know, what is formula used and what could be used. That's one way to raise yield without raising tax.
- Mr. Tomic said what is assessing value.
- Mr. Shapiro said changing rate is way to do it.

Next meeting dates

- The next scheduled EDC meeting dates include: 9/27

Adjournment

- Mr. Pannone moved to close the meeting and Mr. Tomic seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to conclude at 8:20 PM