

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

**EDC Meeting Minutes
6/29/20**

EDC Members

Rob Maidman, Acting Chair	Alan Lury
Jim Berish	Pasqualino Pannone
Eli Hauser	Xander Shapiro

Other Attendees

Susan Price	
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Administration

- The EDC meeting began at 7PM.
- Acting Chair Maidman stated that this is the initial EDC meeting. This is a group selected by the Select Board to address economic development. There is currently one open seat on the committee.
- Each committee member introduced themselves.

Discussion

- Acting Chair Maidman said the Economic Development Committee was charged by the Select Board. It is an advisory board to consult with the Planning Board, Select Board and any other group that focuses on Economic Development. The task is challenging and complex and essential. The ratio of the business to residential tax is 6/94. It's askew. The goal is to readdress this.
- Pat Pannone and Shannon McLaughlin of the Planning Board headed the creation of the Master Plan recently. Mr. Pannone said that the plan took 18 months to plan and develop and outreach. There was a master plan consultant to guide the process and they produced a document to review, prioritize and implement. They spoke about joining or creating an organization to help businesses in town. We need to ask businesses how we can help with outreach and marketing, create a community to support you and your endeavors. Intent of the plan is to build business fabric and cultural fabric.
- Susan Price said there are a lot of people with at home businesses in Sharon. If you look at the Master Plan there are detailed action items and places to start. 2 or 3 items have to do with the EDC. These include creating business groups/chamber of commerce, looking at septic/sewage capacity and arts, culture, community startups.
- Mr. Pannone said the idea is how are all interrelated, interconnected, how one supports another. There is the Route 1 corridor, Heights Plaza and P.O. Square. We need to weave through town to integrate all aspects. He suggested bringing business members in to be involved.
- Sue Price said Sharon is not a member of the Neponset Chamber of Commerce. She suggested inviting Tom O'Rourke who heads it to meet with the EDC to help advise.
- Mr. Pannone said it's helpful that all businesses know they are a part of Sharon. Sharon Gallery businesses need to build a business relationship on the onset. We need to determine how we can reinforce our community.
- Xander Shapiro said when starting a committee; the Master Plan is a lot to digest. We could learn from listening opportunities and talking to Tom O'Rourke.

- Pat Pannone said we can get advice on how to start and get the word out and do marketing. We could benefit from a relationship.
- Pat Pannone said the group should look at the economic vitality section of the Master Plan and prioritize short, mid and long term goals. Present to the Planning Board or Select Board and say out of the Master Plan these are our priorities.
- Eli Hauser said economic constraint identifies validation and defines prioritization. In the budget we have come a long way to narrow the prioritization gap. He said to look at the Master Plan and look at the financial benefits to attract businesses to gain momentum with small business owners.
- Mr. Hauser said we need to decide what our charter is. He believes the owner of Sharon Gallery will be happy to work with the EDC.
- Ms. Price said she would reach out to the Neponset Chamber of Commerce when the EDC wanted.
- Jim Berish said it is a solid idea to rejuvenate the business community to work with Neponset. This would give us room to discover revenue sources for the town.
- Mr. Pannone said the Master Plan is meant to be a living document. It is important to have an implementation committee to tune the goals.
- Mr. Maidman said the Master Plan is one source or guide. There are other activities happening. The Sharon Gallery is a work in progress. There are regulatory challenges. What can be done at Shaw's Plaza? Existing zoning can be barriers. We need to recognize constraints, the lack of municipal water treatment, and demands to have self sufficient water. These are some infrastructure challenges. In the center of town the water treatment is an issue.
- Rob Maidman said one ongoing item almost in place is an economic development issue – solar generation. There was a committee established by the Select Board called the Energy Advisory Committee. A number of potential sites and identified vendors were determined. The sites will be land leases and include the back of East Elementary School which has the capability for small production. There is a larger production site at the landfill which is under DEP jurisdiction but the perimeter is controlled by the town, it is 6 acre parcel. The last site is at Gavin's Pond and exceeds the capacity of transmission infrastructure. These 3 are in route and there will be more sites that may require a subcommittee of the EDC to identify sites understand the concerns of the neighbors and find a means. This is a potential revenue generator. There are probably another 5 to 10 sites to be available. He said the new library has the potential to have solar on it. There are serious constraints in Sharon but they are not insurmountable. There are lots of moving parts. Acting Chair Maidman said the goal of tonight is to lay out the issues to think about. He said he personally is interested in solar.
- Presently Rob Maidman is the Acting Chair until a formal structure is put in place.
- Mr. Lury said one constraint not touched on is the lack of town owned property which puts the town behind the eight ball in facilitating bringing in businesses. The library is a challenge. Looking to the future, we need to determine immediate and long term needs.
- Rob Maidman said we know the base land and what is available where resources exist. Lack of town owned property is an inhibitor.
- Xander Shapiro said We Work brings a sense of community. Diversity and inclusion are very important to him. He will take the lead on outreach.
- Mr. Maidman said he would forward information pertaining to the potential hotel at Sharon Gallery. He said we are keenly aware of the committee makeup and will reach out to a subcommittee to assist with diversity and inclusion. There is also an open seat on this committee.

- Jim Berish said he is hoping we can work outside the box. We need to brainstorm ideas to generate revenue. Look at the idea of following suit with other towns re: assessment rates with residential versus commercial. All surrounding towns are maximizing that.
- Rob Maidman said this falls under the concept of justified incentives. Sharon has never done this.
- Eli Hauser said we need to create a charter and agree to near and long term goals and build a case for long term opportunities.
- Ms. Price said in the Master Plan there is a section regarding taxes which compares rates of Sharon to other towns. The Master Plan implementation has not yet been set up without a broad committee being set up. It is this committee's role to prioritize what in the Master Plan is good for the committee to track like billboards, marijuana facilities and solar locations. She also mentioned We Work stations.
- Rob Maidman summarized the meeting by stating that he will provide the hotel information to the committee, he will send out a framework for a solar subcommittee and July 13th will be the next meeting.
- Ms. Price said if there is an empty seat on the committee have the town advertise and she can share with the Sharon Racial Equality Alliance.
- Mr. Hauser suggested that the committee charter should be created around expectations of what is listed on the town's web page.
- Acting Chair Maidman said that everyone should get familiar with the Master Plan. He asked that everyone think of 2-4 key priorities to focus on and start ranking. These will be discussed at the next meeting.
- The meeting concluded at 8:07PM