

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

**EDC Meeting Minutes
2/1/21**

EDC Members

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

Other Attendees

Avi Shemtov	
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Administration

- The EDC meeting began at 7:01PM.

Minutes

- The Committee voted 4-0-0 in favor of approval of the minutes of 1/19/21 minutes.

Discussion

- Chair Maidman stated that the committee is moving beyond preliminary stages. There are many interesting topics on the agenda tonight. At the forefront is the introduction of new members Milena Virrankoski and Sasha Tomic. All members introduced themselves and a brief introductory conversation ensued.
- Sharon currently has a singular tax rate. The Committee's pros and cons in our purview is about retaining current businesses, and making businesses feel welcome as they know there is a committee to turn to. Find out what they would want and need to expand. Retaining businesses is an important part of the task.
- Mr. Pannone said we should take a holistic approach to attract new businesses and offer resources to existing businesses to help promote them.
- Milena Virrankoski asked how do we ensure current businesses are happy.
- Chair Maidman said these are all excellent points. We need to further define. What is more complex due to COVID, and determine attributes and constraints.
- Mr. Pannone said the big issue in the Master Plan is a town planner.
- Chair Maidman shared his outline for the executive summary report and laid out the framework for all members to include historic, cultural and economic facts. There are many infrastructure constraints despite the beauty of the town.

- Mr. Lury said it is a good start of what's been discussed regarding the key identified issues. Everyone has been through the Master Plan. How do we identify key areas for potential additional business or restricted sites. Work with existing business owners. Get involved with regional chambers.
- Mr. Berish said we spent a tremendous effort to develop list of projects that could generate revenue to reduce stresses from budget. We need a plan of action. How do we step into the tax situation like our neighboring towns. Move our ways toward step taxation. The Town has an 80 million dollar budget. 4 million dollars or 5 % comes from commercial tax. We need a process of introducing step up taxation.
- Mr. Pannone said he agrees with Mr. Berish and Mr. Lury on all counts. He believes we need to prioritize and put COVID first. How do we keep everyone now as they need us now.
- Mr. Tomic asked what is the identity of the town. How do we promote it. How do we get the message to the people. What are the real barriers to doing business. How do we build community which is internal and let developers know we are open for business which is external.
- Chair Maidman asked for suggestions to the report. He wants everyone to work and build out each area. Mr. Berish said he will take the infrastructure and tax section. Working in pairs will be helpful. Chair Maidman said he will resend it out so action can begin. Mr. Pannone will work on the Town Planner piece.
- Part time planner is next on the agenda. Chair Maidman circulated the job description sent out by Mr. Turkington. He said one or more members will participate in the interview process and Mr. Pannone volunteered.
- Chair Maidman said with respect to the Energy Advisory Committee (EAC) a subcommittee is being formed to look at neighborhoods near Gavin's Pond and the landfill. Mr. Shapiro, Mr. Tomic and Chair Maidman volunteered. Ms., Levitts will provide these names to Mr. Turkington. This is a part of the green energy initiative and can be tax generating.
- Chair Maidman said that Mr. Wluka provided information about his construction project on Route 1 and details on the access, wetlands and utilities. He said that Mr. Wluka is a great resource. He asked the committee to familiarize themselves with what was sent.
- Chair Maidman said he had circulated the Easton Patch article regarding what they have done for businesses in Easton. He said the intent of the EDC is to support local businesses. We are an advisory board and want to create solid plans. The other side of this is not to do harm to existing businesses.
- Mr. Pannone commented that we are just up and running.
- Mr. Shemtov said that the town consumers need to be educated.
- Chair Maidman said there needs to be a place for businesses to advertise. We do not have one central place. We need to get started and are committed to getting this underway.

- Mr. Tomic said he understands the frustration and in order to improve see what the town can do and see what the business owners can do.
- Mr. Lury said we need to understand the issues so they can be addressed. What needs to be done. What are the business owners thinking.
- Ms. Virrankoski asked what would make the end users support Sharon businesses. We need to find out.
- Chair Maidman said the central information point is critical.
- Mr. Shemtov said he would work together.

Next meeting dates

- The next scheduled EDC meeting dates include: 2/16 (Tuesday), 3/1, 3/15, 3/29

Adjournment

- The meeting concluded at 8:45 PM by a vote of 6-0-0.