

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

**EDC Meeting Minutes
4/5/21**

EDC Members

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

Other Attendees

Elizabeth Ellis - Town Planner	
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Administration

- Chair Maidman called the EDC meeting to order at 7:01PM via ZOOM.

Town Planner

- Chair Maidman introduced Elizabeth Ellis as the new Town Planner for Sharon. He stated she will be supporting the EDC and will bring an interesting and valuable perspective to our process.
- Ms. Ellis stated she is excited to be here. This job hits all of her interests and field work done in school.
- Mr. Shapiro introduced himself and said the Planner will fill a big gap. We are an advisory committee and appreciate recommendations. Mr. Tomic, Mr. Berish, Ms. Virrankoski and Mr. Lury said they were excited to have her on board.
- Chair Maidman asked Ms. Ellis to describe her engagement with the Master Plan in Norton as parts mimic what we are about to do.
- Ms. Ellis said her field work project was to explore redevelopment of an old factory close to downtown in Norton. Norton worked on their own Master Plan and had similar struggles to meet housing goals and create a large gathering place. They inherited a great property and worked to determine what was feasible. She built a website and survey, created mockups looked at walking paths etc. She enjoyed working with people but it was only for a short period of time and then the pandemic hit. She came in contact with the Planning Board, Conservation Commission regarding the river and wetlands and also met with abutters to the property.
- Chair Maidman said that a lot of the Master Plan at the end is recommendations. What is your reaction when you dissect it at a high level?
- Ms. Ellis said she thinks the Master Plan was well done. There are a lot of built in steps to actions/success. Septic is a big issue. She is starting to break it down for near term goals that are feasible then longer term goals. The next step will breakdown which boards can help implement each task. She will make it more digestive for everyone.
- Both Mr. Maidman and Mr. Pannone will introduce Ms. Ellis to various committees and boards. Chair Maidman said we now have the authorization to create a steering committee to work with Ms. Ellis to best utilize her time. It will consist of 4-5 people familiar to help guide implementation through the committees.

Neponset Chamber of Commerce

- Chair Maidman said Sharon had the Lions Club but never a Chamber of Commerce for business development. We surveyed and realized other towns are more advanced. We have met with the Neponset Chamber of Commerce and this is the one to adhere to. The Town was always a member but through the School Committee. Mr. Shapiro has done research on what's possible to establish and sustain a chamber.
- Mr. Shapiro said small businesses struggled during COVID in many communities. Several businesses have been vocal that we have not done enough. We have a small commercial base. The pressing issue is how we keep small businesses. How do we shop local? What's the tag line? Mr. Shapiro said the Neponset Chamber is more geared to established business. He recommends asking established businesses like banks or credit unions their needs but also make sure it's working for home based businesses. There is a lot of community support. Do we need a downtown association? How do we incorporate home based business? Out of the Master Plan are more outward facing goals of the town and what we are about. Is it more like a Lion's Club or Chamber? We need a business group, website and to find a way to help people promote.
- Mr. Berish said he has seen other towns have successful business groups. How do we kick start this effort? These are run by the businesses themselves. How do we do this in COVID times?
- Ms. Ellis said it's like marketing business to other towns and within town.

Split Tax pros and cons

- Chair Maidman said there are pros and cons to the ultimate recommendation to the Select Board regarding the tax rate. Historically, split 94/6 at same rate for residential and subsidized commercial. At the last meeting we reviewed how taxes are assessed. Route 1 has no residential. It is zoned properly. We got details needed regarding the assessment for property and personal property valuation.
- Mr. Berish said he reviewed parcels and will disperse to the group. All comes back to zoning, flexibility and waste water. He will create an executive summary. He said there are parcels that lend to industrial and thinks it's worth the effort to look at and see the concise summary of what's in the neighborhoods.
- Chair Maidman said all towns around us have split tax rate. Sharon is the only one except for Easton that has the single tax rate.
- Mr. Tomic asked if we can position Sharon as business friendly for commercial to attract businesses.
- Chair Maidman said we are not reaching conclusions now but should think of the direction to head.
- Mr. Berish said he is an advocate of the step rate over a period of time. We collect 4 million dollars from business leaving 2 million dollars on the table by not having a split rate. Growing step rate tax rate over time is a burden on the commercial property owner.
- Mr. Tomic commented that certain businesses might leave if we do split rate. We do not want a negative impact. Can we determine how many businesses this would affect?
- Mr. Lury asked if property evaluation is appropriate. By taxing at the valuation this needs to be reviewed. Valuation drives taxes.

Select Board Reports

- Chair Maidman said he will ask Ms. Ellis to scope out what the report should look like. He wants to consider 5 - 7 topics to assign. Let each group work through with conclusions and recommendations. Each topic is complicated.

Minutes

- Mr. Berish moved to accept the minutes of 3/1/21 and 3/15/21. Mr. Shapiro seconded the motion. The committee voted 6-0-0 in favor of approval.

Next meeting dates

- The next scheduled EDC meeting dates include: 4/26, 5/17, 6/14

Adjournment

- The meeting concluded at 8:15PM by a vote of 6-0-0 as Mr. Berish moved to close the meeting and Mr. Shapiro seconded the motion.