

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

**EDC Meeting Minutes
5/17/21**

EDC Members

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

Other Attendees

Elizabeth Ellis	Maria De La Fuente
Ben Bradford - VP Membership and Economic Development, Massachusetts Biotechnology Council	Kevin Davis - DPW

Administration

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

Ben Bradford, VP Membership and Economic Development, Massachusetts Biotechnology Council

- Chair Maidman and the Committee members all introduced themselves. Chair Maidman stated we are interested in bringing biotech to Sharon and would like Mr. Bradford to share his views. What expansion can there be past Cambridge? Are things less centralized since COVID and there is some land available in Sharon with constraints - what do firms think and how does your organization help.
- Mr. Bradford said Mass Bio was created in 1985 to have lobbyists educate at the State level. Now more lab space is coming to Kendall Square; they recruited 18-19 of the top global pharma companies and this area is on the cutting edge. Sharon is located in the middle. Towns around Sharon have lots of biotech. These are good paying jobs. In Norwood the largest employer is Takeda. He said companies looking to manufacture look outside Boston and Cambridge. He said New Hampshire is the top funded state and Massachusetts is number 2. Venture capital funding is provided to companies with Massachusetts headquarters. People understand human health. Industry can withstand economic downturns.
- More than 50 % of mass based biopharma companies that received venture capital funding were located outside of Cambridge. There were 21 IPOs from Mass based biopharma companies in 2020. 32% of all US based biopharma IPO's were in Mass based companies. It is a resilient industry.

- There is a list of bio ready companies and Sharon is not yet listed as such a municipality. Mr. Bradford said his company is unbiased where companies are located. More companies may be interested in moving out of Boston/Cambridge. More lab space is coming on line. Developers are working on place making to be near trains, highways, having daycare, pubs and lifestyle. Massachusetts is a center for vaccine development.
- A trend is towards virtual life science companies. In order to attract the first accompany he said incentives are important like grants and being a partner in town government. He said to position yourself on the bio ready list you need to educate the town on the industry. Less than 20,000 square feet wants shared space for office space. Lab or manufacturing need 25,000 square feet.
- Mr. Tomic asked who we are competing against. Mr., Bradford said NYC area and North Carolina. Mr. Tomic also asked what common success stories for small towns are. Mr. Bradford said you need a regional approach, like a red line approach, shuttle bus system. Mass companies expanded elsewhere due to turnkey location. You need to work across municipal borders, call a Special Town Meeting for zoning changes, offer tax incentives.
- Chair Maidman said we have waste water constraints and lot size. Mr. Bradford said Boxborough recently got 2 companies with waste water issues. He said make sure the real estate community knows what's available in Sharon. Real estate members of Mass Bio have dedicated life science teams. Mr. Berish said sewer is not on the horizon. Is there lower design or research facility that would survive on septic and Mr. Bradford said Boxborough is an example as the waste water was put above ground. He said bio ready community is an easy box to select. Life science space needs to be made aware to life science community.
- Mass Municipal Association can answer questions on help/incentives for businesses.

Select Board Report

- Chair Maidman said thanks to all for your comments. He would like to complete the report by the end of the summer. Then we can get into individual opportunities. Besides growth he said there is retention.

Kevin Davis, DPW - Discussion

- Mr. Davis says the state sets threshold for low flow bio companies and this depends on what type of company.
- Mr. Maidman asked for an overview on how the town is approaching waste water challenge related to business zones. What can be done and what are the constraints.
- Mr. Davis said in Post Office Square, communal opportunities needed for treatment works to develop. We have 3 protection districts: Zone 2, ground water and surface water. These limit size. It is very expensive to run sewer lines. The Gallery Mall is trying to connect to sewer. They are making an agreement with Foxboro and use this to intensify what they can develop.
- Mr. Davis said the problem with alternate systems is that it can be used for general use in lieu of a traditional system but remedial for repaired systems and not intended for new

construction. It does not add field space. The chief issue is finding space. A discussion ensued regarding PO Square, SHS capacity, South Main and Heights, Shaw's, Sharon Gallery and Route 1 where systems are individual and no treatment works.

- Chair Maidman said all are individualized septic's with no cost effective alternatives right now.
- Mr. Shapiro said waste water is a huge problem with no likely solution. Mr. Davis said would have to buy residential land to create treatment works.
- Mr. Maidman said waste water treatment 101– there are many constraints and we need to work within the parameters.
- Chair Maidman said to focus thoughts on biotech we need to get our name out there.
- Mr. Berish said analytics, support services, digital health, need to capture these services, need to meet with underdeveloped property owners. Share ideas. Try to move the process forward. They are not looking at maximum tax role and community benefit. Need to meet with them.
- Mr. Shapiro said cast the nets wider, bio tech, digital health, do homework for marketing. Should we look at other associations and go to these industry groups.
- Chair Maidman said once life returns to normal will people return to offices or do hoteling. This will dictate. We are learning an awful lot we need to know.

Master Plan

- Ms. Ellis said sewer remains the issue. She obtained information on costs of running a sewer. Seeing the presentation for biotech she said she is thinking the Master Plan focus on Economic Development which could win over the public. Maybe do more on the recreational side to get the buy in. A lot of economic development comes down to waste water treatment issues. She is looking at grants.
- Ms. De la Fuente said need to find grants to offset cost. As way to kick off Master Plan create a guide to zoning. Then put together a business guide with Chamber of Commerce benefits.
- Chair Maidman said it's like trying to thread a needle. There is a finite amount of flexibility and some unchangeable constraints. Objectives need to be realistic. Scaled to what's possible. What moves forward is incremental. Will there be a push to change zoning to be less restrictive. Our job is to frame issues, come up with conclusions. Find ways to make a consensus. Everyone bought into the Master Plan: one of few things the town did communally.

Next meeting dates

- The next scheduled EDC meeting dates include: 6/14

Adjournment

- Mr. Berish moved to close the meeting and Mr. Shapiro seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to conclude at 9:32 PM