

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

**EDC Meeting Minutes  
8/31/20**

**EDC Members**

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

**Other Attendees**

none	
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**Administration**

- The EDC meeting began at 7:05PM.

**Minutes**

- The Committee voted 4-0-0 in favor of approval of the minutes of 8/10/20.

**Discussion**

- Acting Chair Maidman said he spoke with Mr. Turkington and asked that he expedite the hiring of a Town Planner. The Town Planner is needed to help with the execution, expertise and resources. We need to generate a list of priorities to accomplish: short, medium and long term.
- Mr. Berish said he scheduled Chris Cooney of Metro South Chamber of Commerce as well as Susan Whitaker and Margaret Laforest from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development to speak with the Committee on 9/14. Tom O'Rourke of the Neponset River Regional Chamber of Commerce will speak to the Committee on 7/29. Mr. Maidman requested that each member develop questions to have prepared in advance.
- Mr. Lury said he had a conversation with Patricia McCarthy, Town Planner in Stoughton. He said Stoughton does not have an EDC. The Planner reports to the Town Engineer and has less visibility town wide. There are 24 separate owners in the downtown district. A few own multiple businesses and they work closely with the Metro South and Neponset Chambers. They recently received a \$600,000 grant that helped improve some of the store fronts. A major accomplishment is that Stoughton purchased Old Randolph Savings Bank so the Recreation Department was moved to that space. This provided 37 new parking spaces. They also purchased the historic train depot station which provided 33 spaces. They have a 501c3 which is very helpful for obtaining small grant monies. The key is outreach to business owners. They also use a Master Plan as a showcase to show outsiders the town is a good place to invest. They created a website. They received grants for parking management plan. They received COVID disaster funding. They want to develop public and private businesses to build a downtown. They want to create a uniform look in the immediate downtown. Their microenterprise grant for COVID was \$400,000. He said the key is to maintain open communication with owners and have the planner know the owners so they can work together. The role of the planner is to work with businesses and property owners in downtown, spend time grant writing and networking and work with Metro South and Neponset River. Stoughton is self-sufficient with sewage.

- Mr. Maidman asked Mr. Lury to ask Stoughton's Planner if she has repurposed abandoned municipal buildings as this could help with ideas for the library.
- Mr. Maidman shared aerial views of the land adjacent to Route 1 and pointed out open spaces and existing businesses. He said there is not a lot of open space. He said he will speak with the Assessor and Mr. Turkington to identify additional details.
- Acting Chair Maidman said the Planning Board is going to Town Meeting with zoning changes to allow a gas station for a new tenant at the Sharon Gallery. The original zoning has no provision for a gas station and the potential tenant requires this. Across the street at Shaw's Plaza is zoned for a gas station.
- Mr. Pannone joined the meeting at 7:40 PM.
- Mr. Pannone said that for the library reuses it should be given to a realtor to promote. Provide square footage, town population and solicit if anyone is interested. He said do not limit what it is supposed to be. It is the jewel of the town.
- Acting Chair Maidman asked Mr. Berish if when looking at sites, he uses banks to guide him to perspective tenants. Mr. Berish commented that this occurred back in the 90's but not so much today. He said when he thinks of the library he thinks of companies like Regis. They act as a single tenant and rehab the space to create shared office space, conference rooms, provide Wi-Fi, bathrooms, kitchenettes then rent office suites. A discussion ensued and the Committee thought it good idea to develop a single fact sheet for Sharon.
- Mr. Maidman said he will reach out to Mr. Turkington to see if anyone has spoken to the businesses on Route 1 to identify future expansion or their needs.
- With reference to the Master Plan project prioritization, it's important to look at having a planner. Grants are essential. Determine what transportation issues exist to bring workers into the community. Redevelop PO Square to enhance the district from the consumer standpoint. Look at the Route 1 corridor adjacent to 95. Support mixed use at Shaw's Plaza and Heights Plaza.
- Mr. Pannone says he agrees that the Master Plan shows overlap on goals. Everyone has a hand in accomplishing working together to achieve these top goals. Track and retain residential and commercial residents. To achieve goals he said we need beautification of the street front.
- Acting Chair Maidman asked when we should request the webmaster to build the EDC site. The members said now.
- Mr. Pannone said ask all businesses how we can help.
- Mr. Berish said put the ball in the Selectmen's court regarding the tax base. Come up with a game plan to get there.
- Mr. Shapiro said he will post on Sharon's Equity Alliance for an additional member of the EDC.

### **Next meeting dates**

The next scheduled EDC meeting dates include: 9/14, 9/29, 10/13, 10/26

### **Adjournment**

- The meeting concluded at 8:30PM.