

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission (EDC)

MEETING MINUTES

February 13, 2024

The regular meeting of the Commission was held remotely at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, February 13, 2023. Participation was available only via Zoom because of an inclement weather forecast.

Remote attendance: Sarah Rahman (outgoing 2023 Chair), Jack Leader (incoming 2024 Chair), Lisa Adams (outgoing 2023 Vice Chair), Jim Griglun, (incoming 2024 Vice Chair), Matt Segneri (outgoing 2023 Secretary), Jane Obbagy (incoming 2024 Secretary), Debora Jackson, Florent Mali, Marcela Merino, Phil Plottel, Chuck Tanowitz, Barney Heath (staff), and John Sisson (staff).

Approval of minutes: Minutes of the December 12 and January 9 meetings were approved.

Guest Speaker: Greg Reibman, President & CEO, Charles River Regional Chamber, joined the meeting remotely, and spoke about the organization's 2024 priorities and ways in which the Chamber would like to work with the EDC.

After Mr. Reibman's remarks, Commissioners discussed ways in which the EDC might more actively communicate outwardly about economic development issues, educate the public on municipal finance topics, and advance DEI efforts.

Year-End Business

- 2023 Self-Assessment Results
Mr. Segneri shared the compiled results of the self-assessment survey Commissioners had completed online. The survey quantified and qualified Commissioners' opinions of the EDC's efforts in 2023, with some aspects improving and others declining.
- Nomination and Election of Officers
 - Mr. Leader accepted nomination to the position of Chair and was elected by a vote of all members present.
 - Both Ms. Adams and Mr. Griglun accepted nomination to the position of Vice Chair. Each spoke on their interest in serving. Commissioners voted anonymously and elected Mr. Griglun to the position.
 - Ms. Obbagy accepted nomination to the position of Secretary and was elected by a vote of all members present.

- 2024 Goal Setting
After voting concluded, Ms. Rahman shared a list of 2024 priorities onscreen. The list was based on discussion during the January meeting and subsequent input from Commissioners. Commissioners discussed and updated some of the wording.
- 2023 Annual Report
Ms. Jackson moved to “accept the annual report of the EDC with the necessary corrections to be completed by the Chair and the Economic Development Director.” The motion was approved by all members present.

City Updates

Mr. Heath dispensed with Planning updates to thank Ms. Rahman, Ms. Adams, and Mr. Segneri for exceptional service as EDC officers during 2023.

EDC Project Subgroups:

- Ms. Adams shared ideas from the subgroup’s discussion about updating Newton’s economic development strategy. Mr. Leader said the group may want to focus more on micro-issues than macro-trends in the update.
- Mr. Florent presented several ideas from the subgroup’s January 24 discussion of how to create a database of local businesses that could be leveraged by the City and the business community and engender better communication.
- Mr. Plottel said the rDNA permitting subgroup had not met recently. He explained the effort faces some challenges, such as providing input on defined regulatory permitting and making suggestions about process redesign.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

Next meeting: 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 12, 2024.

Submitted by John Sisson, Economic Development Director.