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# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## Economic Development Commission

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### Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** November 10, 2020

**TIME:** 6:30 pm via Zoom

#### 1. Attendance

Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

##### *Commissioners Attending:*

Phil Plottel (Chair); Jean Wood (Vice Chair); Debora Jackson (Secretary); Rob Finkel; Jeremy Freid; Jack Leader; Marcela Merino; Beth Nicklas; Joyce Plotkin; Sarah Rahman; Matt Segneri (connecting around 7); and Chuck Tanowitz.

Barney S. Heath  
Director  
Planning & Development  
Devra G. Bailin  
Director  
Economic Development

##### *Commissioners Absent:* None

*Staff Attending:* Devra Bailin, Economic Development Director.

*Also Attending:* Lisa Adams; and Eryn-Ashlei Bailey

#### 2. Approval of Minutes of October 13, 2020

Prior to the vote on the Minutes, the Commissioners introduced themselves to the proposed new members—Lisa Adams and Eryn-Ashlei Bailey, who will join the EDC after approval by the City Council. Upon motion by Ms. Wood and seconded by Ms. Nicklas, the Minutes were unanimously approved.

Commissioners  
Phil Plottel, Chair  
Jean Wood, Vice Chair  
Debora Jackson, Secretary

#### 3. City Updates

Riverside: The Riverside special permit went before the City Council for discussion and vote on October 19<sup>th</sup>, where it was unanimously approved.

Robert Finkel  
Jeremy Freid  
Jack Leader  
Marcela Merino  
Beth Nicklas  
Joyce Plotkin  
Sarah Rahman  
Matt Segneri  
Chuck Tanowitz

Blue Bikes: Ms. Bailin noted that the bike lane painted on Washington Street eastbound between Kempton Place and Lowell Avenue has been removed. Mr. Tanowitz indicated he could not understand the objection to the trial or why the City decided to terminate the trial. Ms. Bailin explained that more public process is required.

T 617/796-1120  
F 617/796-1142

Trio: It was noted that the Barn has opened and CVS is opening soon..

Zoning Redesign: Ms. Bailin explained that there will be community meetings on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Ms. Bailin will forward information to the members.

Twitter: @newtonecondev

Restaurants/Retail: It was noted that David Punch, owner of three existing restaurants in Newton, is planning to open a pizzeria in Newton Center. Ms. Bailin noted that there are two new businesses open in the Highlands on Lincoln Street—Cacao and Lakon Paris Patisserie. Businesses are opening during the pandemic.

#### 4. Discussion Items:

##### a. Ideas Letter Follow-up

##### 1. Report from Private Funding Program Subgroup

Ms. Rahman reported back on behalf of the subgroup comprised of Mr. Tanowitz, Ms. Wood, Mr. Leader and her. She thanked Mr. Plottel and Ms. Bailin for assisting as well. Ms. Rahman noted that PPP has run out and small businesses are hurting, especially since there doesn't seem to be any federal aid coming. The Subgroup is now thinking that the best way to proceed is to piggyback on the City's possible distribution of additional grants by raising funds to match CDBG funds. They are searching for ways to have a 501(1)(c)(3) raise the funds which would then be donated to the City and dispersed under the rules of the existing program. (Ms. Bailin was asked to investigate with the Law Department about whether/how this could be done.) The Subgroup is now contacting various nonprofits to see if they would be interested in being the collecting charity. Ms. Rahman will write up the details and would be interested in the members' contacts with possible large contributors.

Ms. Adams noted that she may have contacts which might assist in accessing sources of philanthropy and will forward to Ms. Rahman. Ms. Bailey asked about marketing the idea to tap private wealth.

##### 2. Report from Zoning Language for R & D and Modern Manufacturing Subgroup

Mr. Plottel reported that there has been considerable discussion with City staff and there is a consensus that the zoning can move forward as a clarifying/corrective measure. He noted the inconsistencies in the current ordinance are the basis for making the changes now. He worked with the Planning Staff and Ms. Bailin to formulate the docketing language. Mr. Plottel noted that, although he had drafted proposed actual language for the requested amendments, these have not yet been reviewed fully by the Planning Staff. As to the actual changes, Ms. Niklas noted that they are far too narrow and should be more broadly worded and she agreed to look more closely at it. She felt it was imperative that there be as much flexibility as possible in the

language of the amendment. Ms. Bailin noted that draft language was provided to Planning staff but she had not heard anything in response. Ms. Bailin was asked to arrange for a time when Ms. Niklas and Mr. Plottel could meet with the staff to go over the actual language of the amendment.

Mr. Plottel pointed out that the docketed item will go to ZAP and ZAP will work with Planning Staff to formulate the actual language to go to the City Council for approval. Mr. Plottel will seek to have the Mayor, Councilors Albright and Lipof codocket the item.

The docketing language was sent by the Planning Staff to the Law Department which approved its form. Upon Motion by Ms. Rahman and seconded by Ms. Niklas to approve the EDC docketing the R & D/Modern Manufacturing Zoning per the language as revised, the vote was carried with one abstention.

3. Report from Subgroup meeting with NNRC on Mentoring, Marketing and other Matters

Ms. Jackson reported that she is working with the Chamber, Ms. Bailin, and Cultural Department in creating a Lovemylocal Newton campaign to assist businesses. The State created tool kit is being modified by the Chamber to be Newton specific. After the marketing material is finalized, it will be sent out to businesses and the public via Mayor's email, Economic Development constant contact, Cultural Department business email list, PTOs, area councils and Councilors, social media, etc.

b. Requests from the Planning Department

1. Input from EDC on Issue of Representation by Newton Businesses Not Owned by Residents

Ms. Bailin noted that the City is having difficulty finding small business owners (restaurant/retail) who also reside in Newton and she was asked to find out whether the EDC wanted to weigh in on changing the ordinance to allow Newton business owners who do not reside in Newton to serve on the EDC. Mr. Leader expressed the view that non-Newton residents should not vote on matters pertaining to the City. Ms. Niklas noted that the EDC really has no power, as it is advisory only, so did not see why Newton businesses owners shouldn't have representation on the EDC even if they don't live here. Ms. Merino agreed.

It was noted that we do not know how many Newton businesses are owned by residents and how many are not. Mr. Tanowitz noted that if nonresidents were to serve there should be a limit on how many nonresidents could serve. Ms. Jackson noted that such businesses are free to assist in implementing programs and otherwise participating, but the EDC should remain Newton residents. Mr. Tanowitz noted that it would make more sense to define sectors which should be represented on the EDC. Ms. Wood noted that businesses, whether owned by Newton residents or not, are always free to participate in the process.

Mr. Plottel thought changing the ordinance to deal with this issue is perhaps not the best use of the EDC's time. Mr. Leader agreed. Ms. Merino expressed the view that, given that, perhaps best to just recommend that a slot be available for a small retail, restaurant or service business. It was the consensus not to weigh in on the issue.

c. Docketing Items to City Council

See above discussion regarding zoning.

d. Discussion of other activities

There was no discussion of other activities.

5. Other Business

Ms. Rahman asked about available State grants, which Ms. Bailin explained. Mr. Tanowitz noted that there was a zoning webinar which he thought other members might be interested in. He will forward the information.

6. Date of next regularly scheduled meeting—December 8, 2020

The date of the next regularly scheduled meeting for the EDC will be **December 8, 2020**.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Devra G. Bailin, Economic Development Director