



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes

DATE: December 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; Beth Nicklas; Joyce Plotkin; Sarah Rahman; Matt Segneri; and Chuck Tanowitz.

Barney S. Heath
Director

Commissioners Absent: Jack Leader; and Marcela Merino.

Planning & Development
Devra G. Bailin
Director
Economic Development

Also Attending: Lisa Adams (appointed but not sworn in)

Note: Eryn-Ashlei Bailey has been appointed but not sworn in so did not attend.

Staff Attending: Devra Bailin, Economic Development Director.

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

2. Approval of Minutes of November 10, 2020

Upon motion by Ms. Wood and seconded by Ms. Nicklas, the Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. City Updates

Lisa Adams
Eryn-Ashlei Bailey
Robert Finkel
Jeremy Freid
Jack Leader
Marcela Merino
Beth Nicklas
Joyce Plotkin
Sarah Rahman
Matt Segneri
Chuck Tanowitz

Zoning Redesign: Ms. Bailin explained that the zoning redesign meetings were held on December 2nd and December 3rd. Nevana will be preparing summaries from the sessions.

Small Business Recovery Grants 2: Ms. Bailin noted that the staff continues to work on the new grant program, which will likely be funded again at \$300,000 from additional CAREs funds. We are working with a software company Neighborly to reduce staff time.

Armory Update: The Joint Advisory Planning Group has, after the consultant's study, recommended that the City buy the Armory for \$1 for 100% affordable housing. The recommendation now goes to the City Council's Real Estate Review Committee for public hearings and then to the full City Council for action.

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New Restaurants/Retail: 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 noted that she provided members with a written update which was circulated. Ms. Rahman explained the need for an intermediary community foundation and the group is researching other such foundations to see if one could be created in Newton. There was a Newton partnership in existence for about five years (2012-2017), which distributed a multi-million dollar grant. The head of the Partnership, Kathy Markey, provided Ms. Rahman with the white paper that was prepared when the partnership was looking into the possibility of creating a community foundation.

Ms. Rahman explained that there are significant legal limitations on members of the EDC, even in their individual capacities, to raising funds for a community foundation or for the City to distribute. The Subgroup has also had a discussion with MetroWest (Jay Kim) about how his organization raises and disperses funds. It was noted that any foundation would need the Mayor's support.

Next steps will include follow-up with other area foundations, MetroWest and reviewing the white paper from the Newton Partnership. Mr. Leader was going to reach out to the Boston Foundation.

Ms. Nicklas commented that it is critical for there to be a clear statement of the purposes of the funding—what is the public benefit/mission? Mr. Tanowitz noted that private funding will allow higher level action, like placemaking.

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

Mr. Plottel reported that the item has been docketed and is now with Zoning and Planning. The changes had the support of the Mayor and Councilors Albright, Crossley and Lifpof. The next step is to nail down the precise language of the change. Ms. Nicklas explained the current proposal from EDC, which is

clarifying and corrective. The goal is to broadly define research and development so that we don't unintentionally exclude any uses. Because of very specific provisions in the ordinance about RDNA, we need to make sure it remains tied to the provisions related to Biosafety. An open issue is how much small-scale manufacturing to allow as part of R & D as accessory. Ms. Bailin noted that some private parties have been asked by Planning to weigh in and that she is trying to set up a meeting with the Subgroup and Planning staff to finalize the language being proposed.

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 which was modified by the Chamber to be Newton specific and marketing material was sent to businesses. Ms. Jackson, working with the Cultural Department and Ms. Bailin, modified the materials so they could be sent out by businesses and others to the public to remind them to shop, dine, etc. local. After that 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. Docketing Items to City Council

See above discussion regarding zoning.

c. 2020 Assessment

Ms. Jackson suggested that she create an online questionnaire to be filled out by all members to assess the EDC's effectiveness this year. She provided a presentation to the members of possible questions for us to consider. The members discussed the proposed questions and how the information/responses would be collected. Ms. Jackson proposed a survey with a link. Ms. Wood commented that the survey will be very helpful in understanding the role of the EDC and its impact. Ms. Plotkin agreed that the assessment will show the impact the EDC has and change the perception of the EDC as simply a developer's rubberstamp. In order to allow members to express their thoughts, Ms. Jackson will provide space for ideas. Once the officers have approved the form of the assessment, Ms. Bailin will send out the link. Mr. Plottel noted that this assessment will assist us in establishing our goals for 2021.

d. 2021 Goals

Mr. Plottel noted that this has been a very busy year and he wants to get a head start on the Annual Report, which will include our goals. Members should review last year's Annual Report with particular attention on the goals. Ms. Bailin will update the assessment of the Idea's Letter. Mr. Plottel would like to entertain nominations for officers at our next meeting. Ms. Bailin was asked to update and send out the contact information for all members.

e. Annual Report

See discussion in d above.

5. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

6. Date of next regularly scheduled meeting—January 12, 2021

The date of the next regularly scheduled meeting for the EDC will be **January 12, 2021**.

8. Adjournment

On Motion by Ms. Jackson and seconded by Ms. Rahman, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Devra G. Bailin, Economic Development Director