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# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## Economic Development Commission

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### Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** September 8, 2020

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

#### 1. Attendance

Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

##### *Commissioners Attending:*

Phil Plottel (Chair); Jean Wood (Vice Chair); Debora Jackson (Secretary); Howard Barnstone; Rob Finkel; Jack Leader; Joyce Plotkin; Sarah Rahman; Matt Segneri; and Chuck Tanowitz.

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

*Commissioners Absent:* Steve Feller; Jeremy Freid; Marcela Merino; and Beth Nicklas.

*Staff Attending:* Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development; Devra Bailin, Economic Development Director.

#### 2. Approval of Minutes of July 14, 2020

Upon motion by Ms. Jackson and seconded by Mr. Leader, the Minutes were unanimously approved.

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

#### 3. City Updates

Riverside: Mr. Heath explained that the Riverside special permit is before the Land Use Committee on September 10 and 29 to formalize the recommendations to the City Council for the Board order. It is expected to be voted out of Land Use in October and then be subject to City Council vote.

Zoning Redesign: Mr. Heath explained that the residential zoning is moving forward with ZAP, with the focus on residential zoning. The draft proposes increased housing opportunities across the City. There is discussion of allowing two-family where single-family zoning presently exists and to allow large houses to be subdivided into multiple units. It is anticipated that in another two months, the discussion of village districts will start. Mr. Heath expressed his desire for the EDC to be actively involved in that discussion, as well as with parking in those districts. Mr. Tanowitz asked about the proposal to allow multi-family within 1/4-1/2 mile of transit hubs. Mr. Heath explained that there was simply too much opposition at present.

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

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Mr. Tanowitz asked about the Blue Bike program and there was discussion of the proposed locations and park and pedal locations. It was agreed to have further discussion off-line.

#### 4. Discussion Item:

##### a. Ideas Letter

Mr. Plottel explained that we sent around a table of the ideas the EDC recommended to the Mayor and put them in order of the status of implementation. He was pleased to see how many of the ideas were already implemented or actively being implemented. He would like to focus tonight on the areas the EDC can get implemented in the next few months. Ms. Bailin was asked about business concerns and she noted that businesses are in need to financial assistance and getting customers into their shops and restaurants.

Mr. Plottel noted that there were four areas which rose to the top in our previous discussions: private funding, zoning (R&D and manufacturing), collaboration with the Chamber on marketing and mentoring, and parking (long term parking plan, doing away with minimum parking requirements, zoning changes for insignificant modifications, and negotiating with private landlords for use of excess parking for employees). See discussion below.

##### i. Recommended Ideas Implemented

See distributed list.

##### ii. Recommended Ideas under Active Implementation

See distributed list.

##### iii. Recommended Ideas Requiring EDC Action and Formation of new EDC Subgroups

###### 1. Private Funding Program (Item G in Letter to Mayor)

Ms. Rahman pointed out the importance of moving this item. She noted that people are not going into shops or restaurants. Ms. Bailin noted that Boston and Concord had instituted programs. Newton has one through United Way, but it is not dedicated primarily to businesses.

There was discussion of locally owned banks, including Village Bank, Century Bank, Eastern Bank. Mr. Barnstone noted that some businesses, like West Newton Cinema, opened GoFundMe accounts. Ms. Plotkin noted that this is doable but the subgroup needs to detail what it's for and who it benefits and how.

Ms. Plotkin commended that working with the NNRC on marketing and mentoring is a worthwhile endeavor. She noted that mentoring is difficult; members sign up to mentor but mentees not so much. She agrees that zoning is worthwhile but thinks trying to create a private fund to assist businesses would be a unique contribution for the EDC. That would be something no one else is doing.

Mr. Tanowitz noted that this fund should consider providing, not just grants or loans to businesses, but also marketing software, ordering platforms, and generally tools for businesses to grow online. Mr. Barnstone mentioned Toast as an alternative to expensive delivery food services and that perhaps the fund could negotiate with a platform and provide Newton restaurants with reduced cost ordering/delivery service.

## 2. Zoning Language for

### a. R&D and Modern Manufacturing (Item E.2.a)

Mr. Plottel noted that R&D and manufacturing is a critical sector that is still growing yet Newton's ordinance seems to allow them only in a very limited way.

### b. Home Business Ordinance (Item E.2.b)

There was limited discussion of this item and the consensus was that it should not be prioritized at this time.

## 3. Working with NNRC on Mentoring, Marketing and other Matters (Items C.1 and C.4)

See discussion above.

## 4. Parking

Mr. Leader explained the history of the provision allowing others to use church parking lots during the week. The reason this idea got no leverage is because the churches wanted the City to indemnify them. The City could not do so, so the idea went nowhere. There was further discussion of the possibility of a public private partnership with a company that charged for and took care of the parking on such lots. Mr. Heath noted that the shared parking provision in the Centre has never been used. The City is working on a parking plan which allows employees to park via permit on streets in the Centre—a program the City has implemented elsewhere, including in Newton Highland. Mr. Leader explained that the cost of insurance was about \$3000 per lot.

The consensus is that this should not be prioritized at this time.

5. Other Items

iv. Recommended Ideas with No Activity

See distributed list.

b. Discussion of other activities

While no other activities were discussed, the members decided that the best approach to implementation of their priorities was to once again divide and conquer. Ms. Rahman and Ms. Wood agreed to joint chair the private funding group. They were joined by Mr. Tanowitz, Mr. Leader, and Mr. Barnstone. Mr. Plottel and Ms. Bailin will assist as requested. Mr. Plottel will head and be responsible for the R&D and manufacturing zoning initiatives, along with Ms. Bailin. Debora Jackson will chair the efforts to coordinate marketing and mentoring with the NNRC. She will be joined in this work by Mr. Finkel and Mr. Segneri.

5. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

6. Date of next regularly scheduled meeting—October 13, 2020

The date of the next regularly scheduled meeting for the EDC will be **October 13, 2020**.

7. Adjournment

Upon motion by Mr. Tanowitz and seconded by Mr. Leader, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Devra G. Bailin, Economic Development Director