



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes

DATE: June 8, 2021

TIME: 6:30 pm via Zoom

1. Attendance

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Commissioners Attending: Phil Plottel (Chair); Jean Wood (Vice Chair); Sarah Rahman (Secretary); Lisa Adams; Jeremy Freid; Rob Finkel; Jack Leader; Marcela Merino; Beth Nicklas; Joyce Plotkin; Matt Segneri; and Chuck Tanowitz.

Barney S. Heath
Director

Commissioners Not Attending: Eryn-Ashlei Bailey; and Debora Jackson.

Planning & Development
Devra G. Bailin
Director
Economic Development

Staff Attending: Devra Bailin, Economic Development Director.

Also Attending: Councilor Pamela Wright; Randall Block; David Donahue; Mitch Fischman (1021 Beacon Street Team); Ted Fire (1021 Beacon Street Team); Attorney Jennifer Schultz (1021 Beacon Street Team); Katie Enright (1021 Beacon Street Team); and Brian Beisel (1021 Beacon Street Team).

2. Approval of Minutes of May 11, 2021

Commissioners
Phil Plottel, Chair
Jean Wood, Vice Chair
Sarah Rahman, Secretary

After the motion to approve was made by Ms. Nicklas and seconded by Ms. Wood, the Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. 1021 Boylston Street Project Presentation and Discussion

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

Mr. Plottel explained that this matter was first heard on April 13th. The Project team was asked to respond to questions posed by the Commissioners and come back for an additional presentation tonight. Mr. Fischman confirmed that the revised presentation and responses were previously forwarded to the Commissioners by Ms. Bailin. He explained that, since the April meeting, the team has met with the Needham Planning Department staff and filed for the special permits required for the project. In response to questions regarding traffic impacts, they looked at the Natick Starbucks rather than the one in Waltham because the former was more similar. Mr. Fischman presented the updated presentation, consisting of information on Starbucks' future drive-thru concept for improved accessibility in a post-COVID world, economic benefits of the project, zoning justification for a drive-thru at this location, responses to queuing questions, percentage of pass-by trips (89%), impact of idling cars on air quality, job creation, improved buffering for neighboring properties, and other issues.

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Mr. Plottel asked about the existing tenant and was told they are looking for another location for that business. Ms. Plotkin asked about the hours of operation for the Starbucks; Mr. Fire thought they were 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. but he would have to confirm. Mr. Tanowitz asked about snow removal and was advised that the specifics would be added to the special permit requirements. Ms. Adams asked about buffering for the neighborhood; Ms. Enright walked the Commissioners through the landscaping shown on the site plan. Mr. Finkel asked about any changes to the signal at the intersection; Mr. Beisel explained that they would be looking at that more closely but that it does not appear to need any because the project doesn't really impact it. Ms. Plotkin noted that back-up already exists during rush hour as the traffic tries to get to Route 128. Mr. Leader asked about the impact of the idling cars as they wait for product. He was told that the amount is not significant, and they will work to improve wait times. Mr. Tanowitz expressed concern about the queue and the ability to go around it if full. These concerns will be reviewed by the City under peer review of the traffic study. Ms. Rahman asked about whether orders made online will be picked up in the drive-thru or at the pickup window. Mr. Plottel asked about outreach to neighbors, which Mr. Fischman said had occurred with respect to direct abutters. He also provided a summary of the concerns expressed during those conversations.

Mr. Plottel noted that there are several options for next steps: provide feedback in some form, write a letter of support or take no action. This will have to be discussed at a later meeting.

4. City Updates

Ms. Bailin provided the City updates. On June 28th ZAP will hold its hearing on the commercial heights zoning ordinance requested by the EDC. The retail sale of gun ordinance was passed by the City Council; it allows sales by special permit only in only three locations (The Street [which has indicated that such sales are not consistent with its brand], Rumford Avenue near the Waltham border and North Street). In the budget for next fiscal year, the Mayor has proposed hiring a consultant in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to review City practices. The Riverside hearing was continued to June 22 with a continued discussion of transportation issues. The Popup project is going well; there are four sites in Newton confirmed— 141 Needham Street (old Qdoba site); 1 Lincoln Street (former Marcia and Bea's); 1280 Centre Street (old CRG site); and 813 Washington Street (old salon). Centre Street is slated to open soon; the others are likely to open in late June or July. Engagement for Zoning Redesign for Village Centers will take place through September with members of the Support Newton's Storefront Businesses subgroup assisting with different focus groups.

The City submitted a MassWorks application for the Pettee Square project, for which we had received MassWorks funds for engineering and design. Ms. Bailin reported that the EDC can change the day and time of its meetings should it decide to do so. The Mayor reports that the Legislature is working on extending the emergency regulations to allow outdoor dining after August 15th, among other expiring regulations. It is also looking to extend the use of virtual

meetings for public hearings and meetings. Finally, we held outreach on our Local Rapid Recovery grant regarding extending outdoor seating more permanently in places like Union Street.

5. Discussion Items:

a. Reports from Subgroups

1. Support Women and Minority-owned Businesses Subgroup

Ms. Adams made a presentation on Underrepresented Communities and Vendors. Her presentation focused on the discussion questions raised by the Subgroup, next steps, preliminary recommendations short term (including changing the language to “underrepresented” groups, communities, and vendors; collecting data regarding these groups; creation of lists to invite for bids) and longer term (including creating small purchase procurement policies; other procurement policies; purchase of software tools to communicate with underrepresented vendors; unbundling large contracts). The Subgroup also identified many resources available to promote diversity.

Ms. Nicklas suggested that the term “underrepresented” is not clearly defined and often inconsistent so that, before we use it, it should be clear what our intention is. She noted that there are already lists of women and minority-owned businesses and the City just needs to reach out to invite participation. She felt that outreach and invitation did not have to be a long-term goal. Mr. Plottel asked if the group intended to change the name of the subgroup and, if so, to let the EDC know. Ms. Adams said they were considering it. Mr. Segneri and Mr. Plottel discussed being thoughtful in how messages were delivered on this topic.

2. Report from Zoning Redesign Subgroup

Mr. Plottel noted that the Commercial Height ordinance amendments are before ZAP on June 28th. He will attend but, with Ms. Nicklas leaving, he welcomes others to do so as well.

3. Report from R & D Attraction Subgroup

Mr. Plottel will call a meeting of the group soon.

4. Report from Support Newton’s Storefront Businesses Subgroup

Ms. Merino and Mr. Tanowitz jointly chair this Subgroup. A subset of the subgroup has been working with Planning to create focus groups for outreach on the Village Center zoning. Members of the subgroup will assist Utile and Planning in facilitating various focus groups, including commercial real estate brokers, small businesses, property owners, etc.

b. EDC Meetings

1. Discussion of moving EDC meetings to minimize conflicts with Land Use and ZAP Committee meetings.

It was decided to start this discussion and explore alternatives. Members noted that it may matter whether virtual or hybrid meetings are allowed.

2. Discussion of virtual vs. in-person meetings post-State of Emergency

Commissioners discussed a preference for a hybrid model but wondered if that would require a quorum to be physically present. This is presently being discussed at the State level. Councilor Wright explained that the City Council is also interested in pursuing this option. She suggested we let Councilor Albright know our preference. Mr. Tanowitz asked whether the City even has the technology available to do a hybrid option.

3. Summer Schedule

Ms. Bailin was asked to poll the Commissioners regarding their availability for the July 13th meeting, the August 10th meeting and a meeting in between the two. [She did so and, based on the response, the August meeting was cancelled. Decision about the July meeting is to be made when additional responses are received.]

6. Other Business

Ms. Nicklas announced that she is moving to Atlanta to be close to her granddaughter. She has enjoyed her time on the EDC. Members expressed their good wishes, thanked her for her service, and stated that she will be missed.

7. Date of next regularly scheduled meeting—July 13, 2021

The date of the next regularly scheduled meeting for the EDC is July 13, 2021. Ms. Bailin was asked to poll the Commissioners as to their ability to attend that meeting and the one in August (10th). She was also asked to explore with members their ability to attend a meeting in between those dates in lieu of either. [After the meeting, Ms. Bailin did so. The Officers, based on the responses received, decided to cancel the August meeting but to await additional responses to decide whether to go with the 13th or 27th of July.]

8. Adjournment

Upon Motion by Mr. Tanowitz and seconded by Ms. Adams, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Devra G. Bailin, Economic Development Director