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# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## Economic Development Commission

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### Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** December 14, 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; Rob Finkel; Debora Jackson; Jack Leader; Marcela Merino; Matt Segneri; and Chuck Tanowitz.

Barney S. Heath  
Director

**Commissioners Not Attending:** Jeremy Freid; and Joyce Plotkin.

Planning & Development  
Devra G. Bailin  
Director  
Economic Development

**Staff Attending:** Devra Bailin, Economic Development Director; and Hattie Kerwin Derrick, Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion.

#### 2. Approval of Minutes of November 16, 2021

After the motion to approve was made by Mr. Tanowitz and seconded by Mr. Leader, the Minutes were unanimously approved.

#### 3. City Updates

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

Ms. Bailin noted that Mr. Heath is unable to attend but asked that she advise the EDC members that ZAP will be meeting on Thursday December 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Village Center Zoning. She will send the zoom link out. Ms. Bailin was asked to obtain an update on the Alexandria project. Mr. Tanowitz noted that the new bike shop called The Roasted Spoke is now open. It appears that the Dunkin Donut has closed. It was also noted that Workout World is going in on Washington Street where the BSC used to be. Members commented on many businesses cutting hours, including the Starbucks. It was noted that many of their summer employees were students who are no longer available to work.

Lisa Adams  
Robert Finkel  
Jeremy Freid  
Debora Jackson  
Jack Leader  
Marcela Merino  
Joyce Plotkin  
Matt Segneri  
Chuck Tanowitz

#### 4. Discussion Items:

##### a. Reports from Subgroups

##### 1. Support Women and Minority-owned Businesses Subgroup

Ms. Adams explained that the Subgroup met to refine its goals. Since the City has not implemented them, she will be back next time to ask that the Commission approve the recommendations. She noted she is meeting with Mr. Heath, Ms. Kerwin Derrick and Ms. Bailin to discuss early next year. The recommendations are: 1. Include a question on the request for vendor number requesting whether the

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bidding company is women or minority-owned in order to gather data. 2. Establish a procedure for notifying women and minority-owned businesses when a contract is open for bidding. Ms. Wood asked that we obtain clarification as to how vendors are presently notified about opportunities. 3. Expand the list of women and minority-owned businesses beyond the State's Supplier Diversity Office list in order to ensure that certification is not an impediment to bidding but the vendor should be on sound financial footing. Mr. Tanowitz asked what the action is; what are other communities doing? Mr. Leader commented that if we're serious about increasing business to women and minority-owned businesses, we need to create contract set asides like the State does. Ms. Bailin explained that municipalities don't have that authority yet; the only mechanism for carving out a percentage of contracts is in the sheltered market statute and to use it you need a disparity study. Even so, it's a cumbersome tool. 4. Disaggregate capital projects to allow bidding on project components, which is a way to bring in more women and minority-owned vendors. Mr. Plottel noted that this raises the issue of costs, as filed sub-bids can increase costs. 5. Select vendors where women and minorities are represented in the business leadership. 6. As contracts come up for bidding (e.g. at the end of a three-year contract) diversify vendors. Marcela noted that it would be helpful if the City were able to identify contract opportunities in advance so that vendors can be prepared when they come up. Ms. Adams explained that, after her meeting with the City, she would like to have the Commission vote on recommendations.

2. Report from Zoning Redesign Subgroup

Mr. Plottel noted that there is nothing presently to report.

3. Report from R & D Attraction Subgroup

Mr. Plottel reported that there is nothing presently to report.

4. Report from Support Newton's Storefront Businesses Subgroup

Ms. Merino reported that the Subgroup met to refine its goals. 1. Revitalizing village centers. 2. Follow up on COVID-19 recommendations. 3. Support COVID impacted businesses. She noted that the City has mostly taken on these goals. 4. Encourage entrepreneurship. 5. Provide technical assistance to small businesses to allow them to compete. The Subgroup will continue to help with Village Center zoning efforts and provide ideas to make permitting easier for businesses. Ms. Merino noted the success of outdoor dining and popups. Another idea was Mr. Finkel's suggestion of bringing back the EDC awards. Mr. Tanowitz noted that we would need to decide what we want to reward.

Mr. Plottel advised the Subgroup leaders that we will need their help in drafting the Yearly Report so a summary should be prepared for insertion into the Report.

b. 2021 Assessment

Ms. Rahman explained that the Commissioners received in Ms. Bailin's email reminder for this meeting the link to the EDC 2021 assessment. She asked that everyone fill it out as soon as possible. Ms. Bailin was asked to resend the link in a couple of weeks to remind everyone again. We need responses by our January 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

c. Advice to City Council and Mayor on the proposed Electrification Home Rule Petition and Ordinance

Mr. Plottel explained that Ms. Bailin sent out with the meeting reminder the revised draft letter which the officers have worked on. He would like to get the letter out this year if possible. He noted that there was little understanding of what the proposal really meant and much work which staff should have done was done by him. There are only two communities which have succeeded in becoming carbon neutral—Libya because its economy collapsed and France because it turned to nuclear power. The letter really focusses on areas of concern which should be explored and studied before any petition is submitted. The City needs to understand the impacts.

There was considerable discussion about the need to send a letter at this time. The decision was made to proceed. The Commissioners went through the letter line by line, making changes which are reflected in the final draft. Upon Motion by Ms. Rahman and seconded by Mr. Tanowitz, the Commission voted 9 to 0 to approve the draft as discussed with the Chair authorized to do cleanup edits and formatting corrections.

d. 2022 EDC Meetings (Discussion on moving EDC meetings and changing the start time)

The dates for next years' meetings were sent out with the reminder for this meeting. They are: 1/18, 2/8, 3/8, 4/12, 5/10, 6/14, 7/12, 8/9, 9/13, 10/11, 11/8, and 12/13.

**5. Other Business**

The Commission was informed that Ms. Bailey moved out of Newton to JP so is no longer serving. Ms. Wood will be leaving in February when she moves to Boston. Members were encouraged to let Ms. Bailin know if they have any persons they would like to recommend to serve.

**6. Date of next regularly scheduled meeting—January 18, 2022**

The first meeting of 2022 will be held virtually via Zoom on January 18,

2022 at 6:30 p.m.

**7. Adjournment**

Upon Motion by Mr. Leader and seconded by Ms. Adams, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Devra G. Bailin, Economic Development Director