



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes

DATE: February 8, 2022

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; Ali Erol; Rob Finkel Debora Jackson; Jack Leader; Marcela Merino; Joyce Plotkin; Matt Segneri; and Chuck Tanowitz.

Barney S. Heath
Director

Commissioners Not Attending: Jeremy Freid

Planning & Development
Devra G. Bailin
Director
Economic Development

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

Also Attending: Councilor Wright; Greg Reibman; and Heather Tausig.

2. Approval of Minutes of January 18, 2022

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

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

3. City Updates

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

Mr. Heath explained that the City is looking at last mile delivery services and assessing whether they belong in village centers. A study group has been formed. Mr. Plottel noted that Mr. LeMel spoke to the Commission at our last meeting. Mr. Tanowitz indicated that he is serving on the advisory group and the issues are complex, especially when most of the companies seeking to establish these facilities are flush with venture capital funds.

With respect to outdoor dining, the City is moving forward with various initiatives to ensure continued outdoor dining after the April 1st deadline. The City Council approved expansion of sidewalk seating and established a fee of \$250 (which will be waived this year) for parking space dining, which was approved by the Traffic Council as a trial for this year. Temporary zoning and special permit relief regarding private property dining (including patios and parking lots) will be heard later this month by ZAP. Ms. Bailin noted that we revisited Union Street outdoor dining and concluded to bring the dining back into the parking spaces. The restaurants impacted have been told Ms. Bailin will assist in speaking with abutting owners.

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Mr. Heath noted that Village Center zoning is moving forward with Utile making a presentation to ZAP on February 28th. Ms. Bailin noted that The

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Street is undergoing renovations at the old movie theater and Container store, which will include new restaurants, outdoor areas, retail and a facelift of the buildings.

Mr. Heath was asked for an update on the use of ARPA funds by the City. He explained that this is somewhat of a moving target. Councilor Wright noted that the projects funded by the City from ARPA funds are on the Mayor's website. [<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/mayor-fuller/special-projects-and-initiatives/american-rescue-plan-act-arpa>] He noted that a proposal has been put forth by Economic Development to electrify village centers (for lighting and programming). Another program was the Newton Hires ones, which was not as widely used as we had hoped. Ideas come from various sources and the Executive Office formulates and decides.

Mr. Heath noted that there was a complete presentation of Housing Choice at ZAP. He noted that there are really two separate parts—Newton is part of the 175 MBTA Communities. A percentage of housing needs to be allowed as of right—it is a zoning requirement not a production requirement. Planning is working on an action plan to comply.

As to Electrification, this is on for hearing before Public Facilities tomorrow, Wednesday, February 9th at 7:00. Mr. Plottel has been asked to make a presentation, which he shared with the Commissioners. He understands no vote will be taken tomorrow night. If time permits, we will discuss this later in the meeting.

5. Discussion Items:

a. 2021 Assessment

Plottel explained that Ms. Rahman and Mr. Segneri will be leading this discussion. Ms. Rahman explained that the Officers and Mr. Segneri met to discuss how to utilize the 2021 Assessment to pull together 3-5 goals. The bolded sections reflect the top level goals as determined by the assessment responses. Mr. Segneri noted that in 2021 we have robust working groups and he worked with Ms. Rahman to bundle the categories. He suggested that we identify things that create actionable products. Working groups should be aligned with priorities and create goals that allow us to show tangible impacts. The more the goals can be aligned with those of the Mayor and City Council the better. Ms. Plotkin asked what the meaning of the one which created a goal of reaching out to residents. Ms. Rahman pointed out it was pulled from the assessment.

b. Discussion of Goals for 2022

Ms. Rahman asked if anyone had any other top level goals which they felt should be identified and discussed. Ms. Marino thought the idea of coming to 3-5 top goals was good but thought that many were too vague; for example, the one Ms. Plotkin questioned. Ms. Jackson agreed that the goals were vague—DEI should have more focus. Mr. Erol agreed

that there needed to be greater definition, even with the high level goals. Mr. Tanowitz commented that some goals—reaching out to residents—ran through all the goals. He felt that the community foundation was taken as far as it could go and shouldn't remain as a priority. Mr. Leader stated it should be off the list. He felt we should concentrate on Support of Zoning Changes and Support Planning Department. Ms. Adams felt that as to DEI there should be actionable items with emphasis on those the working group is targeting; e.g., vendor diversity in procurement. Mr. Erol suggested applying to Babson students to assist in identifying and outreach to underrepresented vendors. Mr. Plottel noted that electrification and energy conservation will continue to be a focus of the City.

Mr. Segneri said that he felt we have 3-5 high level goals we can list and that working groups will provide actionable items. Ms. Plotkin wanted to make sure that we stay focused on our charge and focus on businesses. Ms. Rahman suggested we go down the list of top level goals as discussed and vote our priorities. A vote was taken on the goals listed: 1. The Commissioners unanimously supported DEI; 2. Support Zoning Changes was supported by most Commissioners; 3. Sustainability and Electrification was supported by 6 Commissioners; and 4. Support Planning Department Staff was supported by a majority.

c. 2021 Annual Report

Mr. Plottel went through the draft Annual Report and made corrections and clarifications requested by staff and members. After the nomination of officers, Mr. Leader moved to approve the draft with changes to the officer positions as voted and further to authorize the Chair to make grammatical and other corrections. After second, the motion to approve the new slate of officers was unanimously approved.

d. Nomination of Officers for 2022

Ms. Wood took over for the Chair in running this portion of the meeting. Ms. Rahman nominated Mr. Tanowitz for secretary and Mr. Finkel seconded the nomination. Mr. Leader nominated Ms. Adams for Vice Chair but she declined. Mr. Tanowitz nominated Ms. Rahman for Vice Chair, which Mr. Leader seconded. Ms. Rahman nominated Mr. Plottel for Chair which Ms. Adams seconded. There were no other nominations. The motion to approve slate of nominees was made by Mr. Leader and seconded by Ms. Jackson. The vote to approve was unanimous.

e. Reports from Subgroups

1. Support Women and Minority-owned Businesses Subgroup

Due to time constraints, this was not discussed.

2. Report from Zoning Redesign Subgroup
Due to time constraints, this was not discussed.

3. Report from R & D Attraction Subgroup
Due to time constraints, this was not discussed.

4. Report from Support Newton's Storefront Businesses Subgroup
Due to time constraints, this was not discussed.

5. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

Mr. Plottel did, however, return to the Electrification discussion, as he suggested he would do if there was enough time. Mr. Plottel asked if there were any questions about the draft presentation he prepared for the Public Utilities meeting tomorrow night. Ms. Adams asked about the process. Ms. Bailin was directed to ask the Law Department about the process—Can the Home Rule Petition be adopted without an accompanying ordinance? Can the Petition be amended by ordinance if it is approved by the Legislature? Mr. Heath commented that the answers appear to be on shifting ground but the general view is that it can be changed to make it less strict but not more strict. Mr. Plottel noted that he will be sticking to the points made in the letter and asked if Commissioners were comfortable with it. Mr. Tanowitz noted that many Councilors have reviewed it. Commissioners were comfortable with the approach being taken.

6. Date of next regularly scheduled meeting—March 8, 2022

The next meeting will be held virtually via Zoom on March 8, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. We will be focused on forming our working groups.

7. Adjournment

Upon Motion by Ms. Adams and seconded by Mr. Tanowitz, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at approximately 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Devra G. Bailin, Economic Development Director