



Town of Walpole
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Community & Economic Development

JAMES A. JOHNSON
Town Administrator

Patrick Deschenes
*Community & Economic
Development Director*

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REMOTE MEETING
12/19/23

Members in Attendance: Donnell Murphy, Brian Connor, Kevin Spendley, John Shalbey, Harry Brousiades (Liason), Patrick Deschenes (Community and Economic Development)

Members Absent: Beth Pelick and Marc Romeo

Meeting called to order at 5:02 PM by Mr. Murphy (Acting Chair).

Minutes

Motion by Mr. Spendley to approve the minutes from October 24, 2023, seconded by Mr. Shalbey.

Motion pass 3-0-1 (Shalbey – aye; Murphy – abstained; Connors – aye; Spendley – aye)

Motion by Mr. Spendley to approve the minutes from November 14, 2023, seconded by Mr. Connor.

Motion pass 4-0-0 (Shalbey – aye; Murphy – aye; Connors – aye; Spendley – aye)

Spring Business Forum

Mr. Deschenes wanted to start discussing potential speakers for the event. The save the date email was ready and he planned to send in early January and the formal invitations would be sent at the end of January. Mr. Murphy thought this was a reasonable amount of time to send invitations.

Mr. Deschenes said the steering committee for the forum met once a month and was successful. Mr. Shalbey asked to set a date for the steering committee's next meeting. The next meeting was set for January 11th at 2 PM.

MBTA Zoning Updates

Mr. Deschenes provided a summary of the zoning initiative. He explained that as the downtown area was already dense, and that the district would be focused in that area which already allowed mixed use by right. There would be two gateway or transitional zones at either end of the district to allow for a tiered model with density increasing towards the downtown. He explained the new district would be an overlay and the underlying zoning would still be in place.

It was important to protect the character of the downtown and Mr. Deschenes explained how subdistricts could distribute the density. While there was no requirement to build the units, Mr. Deschenes stressed the importance of making a well thought out district to ensure strategic development in the future. The committee appreciated the tiered approach.

Mr. Deschenes said the deadline to be compliant with the zoning was December 31, 2024. He hoped to present this at Spring Town Meeting in May, but noted the timeline was tight. The next steps were to hold stakeholder meetings as the opportunity for redevelopment should be understood by the existing property owners. Additional public outreach opportunities would happen in 2024 as well.

While multifamily had to be allowed Mr. Deschenes suggested incentivizing mixed use development. Mr. Shalbey agreed. Mr. Murphy noted that would work within the CBD, but not within the transitional zoning districts.

Mr. Murphy said the EDC wanted to be a part of this initiative and asked that Mr. Deschenes relay that to the steering committee. Mr. Deschenes said he would work on a joint meeting.

Department Updates

Mr. Deschenes updated the Commission on a MassWorks grant for the installation of sidewalks along Union Street. The route was heavily utilized by pedestrians to access the mall and bus route. The project was completed with the exception of a small area under DOT jurisdiction.

Another grant awarded to the Town was ARPA Funding for enhancements to the Town Common. In partnership with the Recreation Department, several enhancements such as music, WiFi, benches, barrels, etc. were installed. Mr. Murphy enjoyed the music on the common. Mr. Deschenes noted the IT director did a great job completing that project.

Lastly, Mr. Deschenes shared the Town was awarded a Housing Choice Grant which provided funding to be used for a Zoning Recodification. This was consistent with a recommendation from the Master Plan.

Mr. Deschenes provided the following updates on 40B projects in Town:

- 55 Summer Street – Discussed the modification that was approved in November to remove the home ownership component and create another apartment building. Mr. Broussardes shared his frustration over the project and did not believe it was the right fit for the area.
- Burns Avenue – Went over the modification that was approved in May and noted it was less dense than previous versions of the project.
- Dupee Street – The case has been in litigation for over a year and a half. There was no clear timeline on when there would be a response.
- Current cases – Pinnacle Point, Darwin Commons and Neponset Village were all at different points of review by the Board.
- Review on Gilmore's LIP Project was nearing completion.

Mr. Spendley leaves the meeting.

Mr. Murphy asked if Gilmore's was a mixed use project. Mr. Deschenes explained there was no commercial component as it was not required for LIP applications.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Murphy to adjourn at 5:41 PM, seconded by Mr. Shalbey. Motion carried 3-0 (Shalbey – aye; Murphy – aye; Connors – aye).