

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING – September 29, 2021, Called to order at 6:04pm

Attendees:

Mike Champoux

Valerie Gingrich

Lilia Maselli

Miriam Nelson

Nancy Vallee

Jared Constantino

Greg Maynard

Carol Boisvert - arrived at 6:07pm

Suzanne Sullivan - arrived at 6:13pm

Robert Oliveri - arrived at 6:27pm

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
2021 OCT 21 PM 1:12
TOWN OF WILMINGTON, MA

1) Pledge of Allegiance

2) Roll Call - All present except Patrick Giroux. Jeff Hull was also in attendance

3) Approval of Minutes of August 18, 2020 WEDC Meeting - Approved, unanimous of the attending members

4) Report from Planning office Recent Projects – Valerie Gingrich

Valerie was contacted about Walgreens. Chase Bank wants to take a portion of the Walgreens and use the former drive through. Would use the front portion. In the beginning stages; they're looking into the permitting process.

Nancy asked about updates on the HSH, the Miller's. Valerie: they would need to get occupancy from the building department.

Mike: called Panera corporate, was told that the local Panera was closed for "facility reasons" (usually remodeling, maybe Covid) and they were supposed to reopen October 10. Given that the sign has come down, this seems unlikely, but perhaps another chain in the brand is looking at that spot. Will keep tabs on the location and will follow up if nothing goes there.

5) Local Rapid Recovery Response – Project Update. Keri Ouellette / Kevin Price – Berry Dunn – Via ZOOM

Recap: the state of MA created a Local Rapid Recovery Program (LRRP) to pair consultants with towns to prepare a Covid recovery plan. Keri and Kevin presented the results of this program's work at this 9/29/21 meeting.

Phase 1: Site visit, initial meeting with project team, data collection, data submitted to Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

Phase 2: Developing project ideas. Review of data, meetings with project team, community engagement feedback was centered around having more options for places to go, more community gathering spaces, more walkable areas. Diagnostic findings included advantage of having two commuter rail stations, demand for more restaurants/businesses, strong manufacturing industry, limited resources to support economic recovery initiatives, high commercial tax rate and land use regulations. Would encourage consideration of building up capacity for economic development initiatives.

Phase 3: Project recommendations

Develop a town brand and brand guidelines: develop a sense of cohesiveness and place.

Would involve hiring a design consultant to create brand guidelines & develop a plan to implement branding initiative

Develop a comprehensive and collaborative marketing strategy

Develop a marketing, communications, and media plan; provide training and support for local businesses in marketing their products and services; work with businesses to identify opportunities for cross-promotion

Recommended looking into Greenville South Carolina (VisitGreenvilleSC)

Revise sign bylaws and create sign design guidelines

Streamline the sign approval process, review existing bylaws and research best practices, establish a design review committee, draft revised bylaws

Establish a facade improvement grant program

Establish a committee to oversee the program and be responsible for reviewing applications, determine the terms of the grant, involve the business community in development of the program

Develop a placemaking and programming plan for the MBTA Station Plaza and Downtown

Use the station as an anchor for beautification and placemaking features. Build upon the town brand initiative, engage the community and stakeholders to support maintenance and managing programming, coordinate programming to generate ongoing support

Case study: The town of Ashland, MA turned a vacant space into a gathering space for the community. They bring in pop-up shops and continuous community programming in the space throughout the year.

Funding opportunities: American Rescue Plan Act funding, MA Downtown Initiative (MDI) Technical Assistance Program (through DHCD), Commonwealth Places (MassDevelopment), Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Mini-Entitlement Program

Next steps: build administrative capacity to support economic development initiatives, identify funding for projects, build relationships and maintain communication with the public community

The final version of the plan is due to the state next Friday. No exact guidance yet on what we will get back from DHCD. Kevin will also look for opportunities to connect across different towns across the state that are a part of the program. Carol asked about how the additional committees they recommended would be created and about developing the greenspace around the train stations (MBTA space). BerryDunn:

those would help streamline the process of signage, beautification, etc. Suzanne asked if we can move forward on some of these projects without having to get approval from the state. BerryDunn: yes, and hopefully this plan will put you in a good position for grant applications for next year.

A final draft of the plan will be send at the end of this week or early next week.

Jeff Hull asked about the branding, specifically how the branding is done on a municipal level as opposed to a business level. BerryDunn: referred back to the examples from the presentation. Branding includes websites, social media, fliers, promotional materials for farmers markets/community events to create a sense of community around town. Nancy asked how the branding is different from the town logo. Mike: the seal/the town continues to be the same, but the economic brand, with a tagline (ie. Wilmington Means Business, Hoptown) and a new image that goes alongside that. Lil: we can have fun with a tagline, get the community involved. Jeff Hull asked about creating a continuity of the downtown space. BerryDunn: a longer term planning process to look at that is a good idea, the sign guidelines is one small, shortterm way to create that sense of consistency. Jeff gave an example of a town in Western MA where they put flags and string lights to create a sense of place.

Mike thanked the consultants and they thanked the committee, especially Mike, Nancy, and Valerie. BerryDunn consultants logged off.

The committee discussed finding funding for the projects. Suzanne recommended that we pay attention to the towns who receive grants to see what other communities have done. Carol: we would want to brand the town consistently across different pockets of development. Suzanne: we would want to create something catchy that's used on everything.

Greg gave examples of town brands that really work, including "I love NY," "Salem, still making history" that create a sense of commonality across all areas of the town. Emphasized that we use the Hoptown brand because that's unique to this town and has been working. Also gave an example of Woburn selling a puzzle that's a map of Woburn. Emphasized that we have to try something small, smooth and steady.

Rob discussed how we don't have a downtown. Gave an example of Stockbridge, MA downtown and other communities that got a trolley to bring residents to the downtown / around the community. Suzanne emphasized the importance of breaking up short term versus long term goals. Cited examples of Woburn using streetlamps, flowers, flags, etc. What short term goals can we identify that we can do and get results on? What long range goals? Nancy discussed filling storefronts, possible pop-up projects that could be grant-funded to support local entrepreneurs. Rob asked about a sponsorship program, having families/businesses sponsor beautification projects. Jeff gave examples of times we've done that on an informal basis. Suzanne said that from what she's looked into, it's usually town or volunteer driven.

Greg: there's a recurring theme of everything that costs money, but we also might be able to use free resources, such as community service groups, high school kids, eagle scouts, etc. Ex. we could approach business classes, art classes, etc. Miriam: this is definitely something the students would be excited about. Jeff Hull: students contact his office looking for community service opportunities. Suzanne: the tech also looks for projects. Mike: marketing requires a high level of strategy that we want a higher level of

professionalism working on. Lil: there's plenty of projects that could be done that could work alongside the marketing project. Jeff recommends we create a list of projects that could be desirable. Jared emphasized that the creativity could definitely come from youth, but the implementation is professional.

Carol asked about checking with the MBTA to see what land could be used near Wilmington train station. Valerie asked if we could observe how often that parking lot is used. Valerie suggested that we take a look at that plan and make an agenda item to prioritize one or two projects that could be done sooner rather than later. Mike suggested that we meet sooner.

6) Town Video – Action Items.. where / who to get it to and by whom?

The video reached the public before we presented it to the Board of Selectmen. We're putting it on the town website, youtube, and sending it to realtors and businesses. Trying to make it more prominent on the town site.

Mike discussed how to publicize the video more. Nancy is going to look into lists of management companies. Lil is going to look for a list of target company names, then can look for contacts. Rob asked about agencies/departments we can send it out to at the state level. Mike will reach out to Maria DeStephano. Encourages everyone to put it on their social media and keep reinforcing it.

7) Subcommittee Report: Economic Development Professional - postponed to next meeting

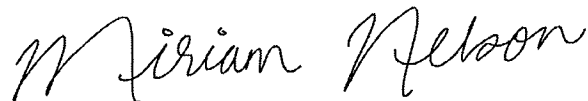
8) New Business: Member statements & discussion agenda items for next / future meeting(s) -none

9) Public Comments

10) Next Meeting Date - October 20, 2021

11) Adjourn - Motioned by Nancy, seconded by Lil, unanimous

Respectfully submitted by Miriam Nelson, Recording Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Miriam Nelson". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

10/20/21