

**ASHBURNHAM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

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**28 February 2017 - 6:30pm
Ashburnham Town Hall - Downstairs Meeting Room**

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PRESENT: Bill Johnson, Chair, Chris McNabb, Leo Janssens II, John Enright, Rosemarie Eldridge Meissner, Vice Chair, Jaclyn Wooding, Secretary, Joseph Kalagher, Deb Gardner (Missing: Ronald Putnam, Christina Sargent)

- 1) OPENING REMARKS - Bill Johnson opened the meeting, 6:31pm.
- 2) SHORT-TERM GOALS RESULTS - Bill passed floor to Meissner, who hands out spreadsheet with the short-term and long-term goals expressed by members. (Attached as Appendix A) The list has been sorted into categories such as Signage, Marketing, Beautification and Downtown Cleanup. References are made to the number of members that feel strongly about each initiative.
Signage: Should we take a look at the current zoning regulations in regards to signage? Do we need to review and possibly suggest revisions to these regulations?
Parking: Possibly more of a long-term goal. Bill believes traffic flow studies may have been done that the commission should review.
Expedited Permitting: Enright mentions he has reviewed the state's expedited permitting guidelines, and that, upon approval, expedited means 210 business days. He questions whether the town can do anything to create its own expedited permitting, fast-tracking new business to something much less cumbersome than 9 or 10 months for permitting approval.
Abandoned Buildings: Meissner asks whether there should be a fine in place to encourage owners, including banks, to move these properties along.
Main St/101 Intersection: Speed limit may need to be reviewed, as on-street parking makes visibility difficult, and the crosswalks are very dangerous.
- 3) WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE/COMMUNITY OUTREACH - Johnson discusses whether the group should break off into a number of sub-committees, in order to tackle the first few short-term goals. A discussion is had regarding the "Adopt-an-Island" program at the intersections in town. Enright asks in regards to the lease currently held by the Bresnahan Center, whether we can look at separating their portion of the parcel with the commercial/industrial portion located on the back of the parcel. McNabb mentions the town website needs revamping, or possibly a new website entirely. McNabb offers to take the lead on research and development on a new site. Meissner discusses the commission's desire to engage local business owners. She will compile a list of initial locations and questions to ask during member interviews with the owners. Gardner asks if there is transportation through the town. Johnson says he will ask and follow up at next meeting.

- 4) COMMUNITY FACELIFT - Johnson updates the group on a number of items. Town Administrator Heather Budrewicz has applied to MRPC for two DLTA grants for the town. The first would be to start work on the economic development piece of the Master Plan. The second would be for revamping the signage zoning for the town. It is also shared that the Agricultural Commission has money designated for "Right to Farm" signs. A discussion by the group ensues with suggestions such that the Rail Trail would be better served by a sub-committee of the group. Also, in regards to beautification, is there a way to encourage businesses to clean up and remove trash and other blight. In regards to the light post banner idea, at this point, all monies collected would go into town account. Johnson discusses further ideas for DPW cleanup and the adopt-a-space project. Meissner suggests a collaboration with the Parks and Rec commission and the art council to put on "First Friday" events or the like, to coincide with the summer concert series possibly, with art and food vendors. The group decides to hold off on sending a public survey until the commission has had a chance to speak with businesses first.
- 5) PUBLIC COMMENT - Richard Wright of Ashburnham Hardware urges that we need to have sidewalks be a main focus of improvement. Of particular concern is the stretch from downtown to the Public Safety Building.
- 6) APPROVAL OF MINUTES - A discussion is had to amend the 13 February minutes. Corrections made referred to the description of the photos from Meissner's presentation, as well as the status of Phase II of the 21E study for the current DPW site. Motion to approve amended Minutes from 28 February 2017 is made by McNabb, seconded by Janssens. Motion passed 6-0-1 (Gardner abstained)
- 7) FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE - Next meeting is planned for Monday, March 13, 6:30, Public Safety Building Training Room.
- 8) ADJOURNMENT - Motion to adjourn by Janssens, seconded by Wooding. Meeting adjourned 9:02pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jaclyn Wooding, Secretary