

Town of Bolton
Economic Development Committee (EDC)
Minutes to EDC Meeting
Monday February 20, 2012
Slater's Bolton, MA

Attendees: Helene Demmer, Heather Hughes, John Karlon, Dina Mazzola, Bharat Nair, Chris Nelson, Bruce Slater

Non-member attendees: Bob Czekanski and future member Erik Neyland

Members not in attendance: Jennifer Atwood Burney, Steve George, Lysa Miller, Eileen Schomp

Next meeting: EDC meeting March 06, 2012 – public forum on April 2

New member:

Welcoming new member Bharat Nair – Talked about why he wanted to become an EDC member; during the Smith Property events he started looking at emotions leading up to the vote – and thought there needed to be a more cohesive strategy amongst groups – wanted to participate in EDC to help encourage the interactions.

Discussion

Challenge that the EDC is really an advisory group – we can have discussions and make recommendations but we are not in the position to make/vote in decisions for the town.

Other future member: **Erik Neyland**– a member of capital planning which does research for the advisory board. He wanted to get involved, smart business – slow down residential taxes.

>>**ACTION:** voted unanimously to include Erik Neyland – follow-up with Jennifer Burney

Presentation by Chairman of Advisory Board, Bob Czekanski

Presentation by Bob Czekanski on Bolton Tax rates – this was not an official advisory board presentation nor a campaign or part of anyone else's campaign.

There are many opinions of Bolton's tax rate in state and he wanted to get some data behind the tax rate. Looked at same assessed value +/- 10% - determined by the sum of all the business +residential +equipment values = total assessed value – compared the towns with similar total value.

Conclusion - reliance on just a few businesses makes the reliance on residential tax base even more extreme – Bolton’s total expenditure is average among towns of this size. Bolton’s reliance on residential property taxes is extreme compared to other towns in MA. Commercial and industrial values fell faster than residential properties thus putting additional upward pressure on residential taxes. High per-capita EQV makes more state aid unlikely (density metric). Need to diversify tax base, simplify process for development of commercial and industrial properties.

Status of Economic Action Plan

Heather Hughes to provide draft out of to members as well as Bob Czekanski

Goal of plan- increasing numbers of choices for Bolton– diversification of the residential tax base. Make Bolton more desirable – help housing values

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Creating a platform of revenue diversification

- Working back from the May town meeting May-7 – “low lying fruit”
 - Promote existing vacant property -
 - Understand how to move forward with Salt Box
 - Increase services
 - Capture existing 117 traffic for business in Bolton

Actions:

- public forum awareness – share information via a standard messages – April 2 or 9 – educate the voters, explain the process – put village overlay in correct context
- Have Salt Box back to EDC to see the plan they are presenting and understand what their alternatives are if the overlay does not pass – are they considering a citizen petition?
- Helene to set up public forum meeting and Heather to champion the messages, may need break out non-quorum meetings for preparation
- EDC blog – Dina to pursue
- article in the common – “did you know” - not sure who took this action item
- Ask Iris (LHD) to come to March 12 EDC meeting and communicate the implications of LHD and how it relates to village overlay, salt box, revenue diversification