

Economic Development Committee

February 01, 2016 Minutes

Town Hall: 7 p.m.

In Attendance

Helene Demmer - Chair

Eric Neyland - Vice Chair

Erica Uriarte - Town Planner

Dave Pettit

Mike Murphy

Bruce Slater

Helene Demmer
3/14/16

1. Approved Minutes from January 2016

EDC approved the meeting minutes from January 4, 2016.

2. Margaret Campbell - Solarize Bolton

Margaret Campbell from Solarize Bolton provided a brief overview of their initiative to provide a single installer for residential and small business solar installations at a reduced cost. Solarize Bolton is in the process of applying for grant money from the Clean Energy Center (CEC) to help assist with the cost of outreach/education to residents and to establish an RFP to send to local installers. The responses to the RFP will be reviewed by Solarize Bolton, CEC and a 3rd party engineer hired by CEC. Potential installers will be interviewed prior to final selection. The proposals will provide tiered pricing based on number of kW installed. The more kW installed, the lower the price will be for installation. Therefore, Solarized Bolton is seeking as many interested residents as possible (economies of scale). As part of the program, there will be a solar coach available to serve as the main point of contact to residents interested in signing up for solar installation. Solarize Bolton meets every Friday night at Sharon Shepela's home.

15 communities currently participate in this program including Harvard. In Bolton there are approximately 85 existing solar installations (and approximately 1,800 total homes). Solarize Bolton conducted a survey of which they received 120 positive responses to the initiative.

The cost of solar installation will be the responsibility of the resident. Solarize Bolton will consider installers that do both roof and ground mounted systems. The average cost to a homeowner for a 5kW system is approximately \$4 a watt or \$20,000 per system. Lease agreements with the installer are also an option. A 5 kW

system would require dozens of panels (options for frame color; typically black). The system would include an inverter and a new metering box.

Although a single installer will be selected as part of the program, residents interested in solar can choose not to participate in the program and go with their own installer. However, they will not benefit from the economies of scale by going with another installer. In regards to a preferred installer, Solarize Bolton has been working closely with New England Clean Energy in Hudson, MA.

There are no options to upgrade the panels over time as solar technology improves. The cost to replace the panels would outweigh the increased efficiency of the new panels.

It's not certain how panels are impacted by ice dams. The panels would likely cause the snow and ice to slide off preventing as much build-up.

The solar installations at Bolton Orchards are large scale commercial and would not qualify as part of this program.

No tax dollars will be spent as part of this program.

E. Neyland motioned for EDC to support Solarize Bolton and to sign the letter of support. 2nd by B. Slater. All in favor 5/0/0.

3. Jon Golnik -Massachusetts Office of Business Development (Central Region)

Jon Golnik, Regional Director for MOBD, oversees the central region comprised of 65 towns including Bolton. The MOBD has a total of six regions.

The MOBD wears two hats. The first hat is administering the Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) where companies can receive tax incentive credits in exchange for job creation. Applications through this program are received four times a year (March, June, September and December). Gateway cities (e.g., Leominster, Fitchburg, Worcester, etc.) identified by the State as needing extra help are required only to retain 50 jobs per year in exchange for tax incentive credits. Preliminary applications are submitted to the Director of the program, Annamarie Kersten, for review. If she approves the application, then she will request a supplement application with more detailed information to be reviewed by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) for approval/denial of the application. Typically projects that make it to EACC are approved.

The Charlie Baker administration is focused on moving business and people from the Boston metro area beyond Route 128 and Route 495. This region can compete with Boston with skilled workers (matching skills with the needs of the employers). The administration is looking to improve vocational schools.

The other hat that MOBD wears is to provide support on regulatory issues and/or red tape. J. Golnik works with towns/applicants to apply for various grants (e.g., MassWorks, Ch. 90 funds).

H. Demmer indicated that B. Slater was experiencing a long drawn out process trying to obtain a liquor license. It required Board of Selectmen approval, town meeting approval and state legislation passed. Currently it's being held up on the Senate floor. Representative Kate Hogan's office has been assisting with keeping track of the location of the bill. J. Golnik will look into the issue and provide assistance if possible.

J. Golnik will look into whether or not Bolton has signed an Economic Community Compact. Littleton recently signed a compact. This is helpful when applying for MassWorks Grants (apply once a year, must have job creation). J. Golnik will also find out if Bolton is designated as an Economic Target Area (ETA). Bolton applied in 2010.

The EDC questioned how small business could use the services of MOBD. J. Golnik recommended that if the EDC knows of a small business opening in Bolton to contact him as soon as possible (even if not many jobs are to be created) in order for MOBD to review the business and generate a Letter of Intent with the State.

The EDC discussed the vacancy of the Skinner property (357 Main Street) and Cobham (Main Street). The EDIP includes an Abandon Building Renovation Deduction (corporate excise deduction or a personal income tax deduction equal to 10% of the cost of renovating an abandoned building). The building must be abandoned for 24 months and must be within an Economic Opportunity Area (EOA). Bolton will need to apply for these properties to be an EOA. Bolton Office Park (580 Main Street) is also only 50% occupied with vacancy for years. J. Golnik will find out if the entire building needs to be abandoned in order to apply for the deduction. J. Golnik noted that MassEcon may be a good source for posting properties for sale.

4. April Breakfast Meeting Planning

The 3rd annual EDC business gathering is scheduled for April 27, 2016. Guest speakers include Jon Golnik from MOBD and Paul Matthews from the 495 MetroWest Partnership.

An invitation to speak was offered to Representative Kate Hogan and John Polanowicz from Steward Medical Group. Unfortunately neither Kate nor John are available to attend the gathering. E. Uriarte will reach out to Don Lowe, Town Administrator, to see if he would be willing to speak on behalf of Bolton.

The event will be tentatively held at the Nashoba Valley Winery. Slater's Pizza will host if the winery is unavailable.

5. Budget Update – January 26th Meeting with Advisory Group

Approximately \$430 of last year's budget (FY2015) was spent on the 2nd annual EDC business gathering to pay for The International accommodations and the remaining \$570 was used towards paying for the "welcome to Bolton" signs.

Advisory approved \$1,000 for FY2017 to pay for the 4th annual EDC business gathering as well as marketing material and/or advertisement to grow the Facebook page.

6. Sewer District Discussion - Follow-up after Board of Health Meeting

The EDC is waiting for the Board of Health to finish their review of the current status of the existing septic systems on Main Street. H. Demmer received correspondence from Scott Powell, Board of Health Member, stating that the Board was still investigating.

M. Murphy was informed by a resident on Main Street that there were several homeowners on Main Street that had been issued notice by the Board of Health of failing septic systems. He indicated this information needed to be verified by the Board of Health.

B. Slater stated that he would be incurring a large expense in order to upgrade his existing septic system in order to meet the Title V requirements for the seating capacity at Slater's Pizza.

M. Murphy noted that the cost of installing/repairing septic systems was disproportionate when comparing the revenue of a small business versus a large corporation (e.g., Slater's versus Chipotle).

The EDC also discussed concerns of siting private wells. Homeowners having to site both private well and septic make it challenging to meet the required offsets. A failing well can be as catastrophic financially to a homeowner as a failing septic system. Both Hudson and Sterling have public water supplies fed by wells. It seemed unlikely that Bolton could connect to a neighboring system to provide public water to Main Street.

E. Neyland will begin to work on a poll/survey to send to residents on Main Street to determine their interest in connecting to a sewer district and how much they would be willing to pay as a betterment fee.

7. EDC Chair & Membership for Upcoming Year

H. Demmer is stepping down from Chair and the EDC. She will be writing an editorial for the Bolton Independent regarding the EDC. H. Demmer hopes to use this editorial to recruit new members. H. Demmer will focus her remaining time on recruitment and will try to pursue a local real estate agent.

E. Neyland volunteered to be Chair for one year until the Committee can find a replacement for H. Demmer. M. Murphy supported E. Neyland being Chair. The Committee felt this would provide continuity through the transition.

The EDC will also try to use the Bolton Community Group to recruit new members. Many of the people on Bolton Community Group would like to see additional business/amenities come into Bolton.

8. Town Update

The Planning Board public hearing for 470 Main Street was closed and the Board voted to grant the Special Permit. The applicant proposes a commercial building next the Country Cupboard to operate restaurant and retail uses. E. Neyland posted a rendering of the new building on Facebook indicating the Planning Board issued the Special Permit. The original content was shared numerous times and received significant traction on social media.

The open house/ribbon cutting for Bolton Primary Care will likely be moved to April 2016. EDC will work with both the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce and Assabet Chamber of Commerce to organize the event. Once the date is set by Nashoba Valley Medical Center, E. Uriarte will confirm attendance by Representative Kate Hogan.

Bolton Local is spear heading the Green Community initiative. Bolton considered applying for this designation in 2011, but the Stretch Code failed at town meeting. At the time, the requirements in the Base Code and Stretch Code were significantly different. Mike Sauvageau, Building Inspector, presented the Stretch Code to the Board of Selectmen at their last meeting. The current Base Code is no longer significantly different from the Stretch Code. However, the Stretch Code will be eventually updated. The majority of surrounding communities have applied for Green Community status. The designation would allow Bolton to receive grant funding to conduct projects to improve energy efficiency. Planning Board, in support of the Green Community initiative, is bring forward an article to town meeting for as-of-right solar overlay district bylaw as one of the criteria for Green Community status.

9. Upcoming EDC Meeting Dates

Upcoming meeting dates include March 7th, April 4th and the Business Gathering Breakfast on April 27th. The EDC will need to decide whether or not to meet in May. The first Monday of May is the annual town meeting. The EDC could meet May 9th. The Committee will decide at their next meeting.

H. Demmer will not be available to attend the last meeting of the fiscal year on June 6th. This will be her last meeting with the EDC. The Committee will likely change the date to June 13th so that H. Demmer can be present.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

E. Neyland motioned to adjourn meeting at 8:57 p.m. 2nd by M. Murphy. All in favor 5/0/0.