

Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, April 5, 2011 7:00 PM
Old Library, 5 Fairbank St., Harvard, MA

MINUTES

Members Present: Rich Maiore, Chairman, Bruce Stamski, Jim Higgins, Elaine Lazarus
Members Absent: Al Combs

Present: Michelle Catalina, Joe Hutchinson, Valerie Hurley

- **Minutes**

The Minutes of the February 15, 2011 meeting were approved by unanimous vote. The Minutes of the March 8, 2011 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

- **New Business**

Mr. Maiore asked what the next steps are now that the ETA article has passed at town meeting. Ms. Lazarus stated she will follow up with respect to the process of getting the special legislation submitted, and will also follow up with the Mass. Office of Business Development with respect to the application requirements, if any.

Mr. Higgins reported on the outcome of the outreach to local businesses to date. He stated that the businesses seemed grateful to be asked for their feedback, but suspicious. He stated that businesses felt that the Town has an anti-business attitude and in order for this to change, a different attitude would need to permeate throughout. He noted that policy makers and others (such as inspectors) need to be on board as well. He stated that it was expressed that some are very hesitant to improve their property because they think it's a game to the Town and it isn't worth it. He stated that a point of contact for businesses for the Town and more information/guidance on the web site would be helpful to them. Mr. Stamski stated that reorganizing and formatting of the Town's regulations correctly so they are user-friendly could go a long way. Mr. Maiore suggested a regulatory audit.

Mr. Higgins noted that when asked what would make things better, the businesses answered: 1) change in attitude; and 2) a thorough and comprehensive review of regulations, especially signage for multi-tenant locations.

Ms. Catalina stated she will bring the signage concerns to the Planning Board, and suggested that if examples of good regulations can be found, that would be helpful.

The Committee discussed how to work on the perceived anti-business attitude of town officials, boards and employees, and it was noted that the Committee could meet on a regular basis with them to discuss the issue. Also discussed was holding meetings with businesses and seeking feedback. The Committee discussed that it was important to have

a designated point of contact to assist businesses with permitting and process questions, and predictable processes and policies that people can follow. Also discussed was the preparation of permitting flow charts to see how improvements can be made.

Mr. Stamski noted that he still needs to follow up on the meeting that he and other officials had with Devens regarding sewer and water, by preparing a written summary. He repeated that the Devens officials stated that from a technical standpoint, there is the ability to connect.

Adjourned: 8:25 PM

Submitted by: Elaine Lazarus

Approved: May 10, 2011

Documents used at the meeting:

- Meeting agenda
- Results of Existing Business Interviews – 2011
- Harvard Business Pulse – 2 Winter 2011
- Draft minutes of 2/15/11 meeting
- Draft minutes of 3/8/11 meeting