

Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, March 13, 2012 7:00 PM
Old Library, 5 Fairbank St., Harvard, MA

MINUTES

Members Present: Rich Maiore, Chairman, Chris Ashley, Sandy Chapman, Elaine Lazarus

Members Absent: Jim Stevens

Mr. Maiore updated the Committee as to the status of the master plan process. He noted that there would be an article on the annual town meeting warrant seeking \$100,000 for phase 2, and that phase would focus on resolving the Devens issue. It was noted that the Master Plan Steering Committee feels that Devens uncertainties need to be resolved before making recommendations in other areas, because they are interconnected. The Committee discussed the issue. The Committee expressed concern that planning for non-Devens areas, such as the C district, would be put on hold. It was noted that the EDC's mission will continue regardless.

Mr. Maiore stated that the Planning Board is opposed to the hiring of a Town Planner, which was recommended by the EDC. The Committee expressed concerns that the desired economic development in the C district will be harder to achieve without professional planning assistance.

Mr. Maiore noted that the Planning Board is working to develop a solar bylaw and is considering limiting the use to the C district. He asked how the Committee feels about that. Mr. Chapman noted that such a restriction would be too limiting because there are other locations that are much less visible to the public than the C district, if appearance is a concern, and it can be sited in residential districts and not have a negative impact. The Committee noted that the C district is the only place where the zoning allows the uses that residents want (i.e. grocery store, restaurant), and if used for something else then it is not available. After discussion, the consensus of the Committee was that a standalone solar facility is not the highest and best use for the land in the C district.

An update was provided on the progress of the sign bylaw changes recommended to the Planning Board by the EDC. Mr. Maiore stated that the EDC should plan to make a presentation with the Planning Board at town meeting. Mr. Ashley stated it will be very important to publicize the changes and provide information to the public in advance of town meeting. Mr. Maiore stated he will write an article for the newspaper. Options for town meeting were discussed, including having a table set up with information about the changes and having a mock-up sign placed where it is visible.

The Committee briefly discussed traffic issues in the C district and the importance of obtaining data and looking at alternative solutions.

The Committee discussed creating its own plan for the C district if the master plan process currently being discussed will result in a delay or if its scope is not sufficient. It was the consensus of the Committee that it could create an outline and work on such a plan to optimize what is already permitted and examine the opportunities available. The plan should include traffic, water and sewer solutions.

Adjourned: 8:30 pm

Elaine Lazarus, Member

Approved:

Documents used at the meeting: None