

Economic Development Committee

Thursday, January 30, 2014 7:00 PM
Old Library, 5 Fairbank St., Harvard, MA

MINUTES

Members Present: Jim Stevens, Chair, Rich Maiore, Vice Chair, Duncan Chapman, Christopher Sintros, Peter Warren

Members Absent: Elaine Lazarus

Planning Board liaison: Tim Schmoyer

Guest: Town Planner, Bill Scanlan

1. Introduction of Bill Scanlan

The EDC appreciated an opportunity to meet Bill Scanlan, Town Planner. Bill went over his experiences with Town government and charter within Harvard.

2. Discussion of the Planning Board meeting attended by Jim Stevens - EDC, Leo Blair – BOS, and RKG Consultant Judi Barrett.

The Planning Board invited the EDC to attend a discussion on the C District with BOS representative Leo Blair and RKG Consultant Judi Barrett. Mr. Stevens shared the meeting content and discussion points, most of which related to bringing a potential grocery store to Harvard. Mr. Stevens pointed out the RKG Consultant and Mr. Blair agreed changes to the Town Zoning Bylaws restricting the size of a commercial building are impeding Harvard's consideration for a grocery store. Citing discussions with Idylwilde and Hannaford's, Mr. Blair suggested no chain would spend required diligence to study the market potential of Harvard with the current building restrictions. Ms. Barrett also commented on the importance of the C District to the Master Plan. Mr. Stevens shared the objectives by RKG Consultants to learn how the potential developments in the C District may affect residents and the Town in general. One of the main topics of discussion was Devens and the impact if reclaimed by Harvard, or not. It was noted that Devens is now making money since TIF's for Bristol-Meyers have expired and the revenue could be valuable for Harvard. At the same time, there are people living in Devens who send their children to Harvard schools and do not pay taxes. Since the CEO of Mass Dev. wrote an open letter saying they willing to manage Devens until 2033, the chances are likely current Devens residents will vote to remain independent. Further, the development of Devens, especially the DREES/Economic Area, may affect Harvard's C District. Mr. Stevens noted the Planning Board meeting was well worth attending for improved dialogue between the PB, BOS, and EDC.

3. Master Planning Steering Committee and Master Plan update

The EDC discussed the latest updates from the Master Planning Steering Committee as provided by Mr. Scanlan. It was noted Ms. Lazarus has been the EDC liaison and will provide more insight at the next EDC meeting where Joe Hutchinson is expected to be the guest. Mr. Scanlan

gave overviews of the MPSC and the RKG Consultants. The discussion turned to the affects Devens will have upon the Master Plan. It was uncertain if the Town would get any breaks from reclaiming land on Devens. Mr. Scanlan noted there will be an open forum meeting on March 1 to the discuss Devens and the Zoning bylaws.

4. Placeholder for a Warrant to change bylaws Sec 125, 13, Subsection J and Sec 125, 52G, 2(b)

The MSPC discussion and its effects upon the C District lead to the issue around current zoning bylaw restrictions. The EDC and Mr. Schmoyer reviewed the current bylaws affecting the size of a commercial building in Harvard. The Committee discussed the potential for submitting a Warrant at Town Meeting for changes to specific bylaws, Sec 125, 13 – which states a grocery store is limited to 15,000 sq. ft. and Subsection J and Sec 125, 52G 2(b) – which state no building shall exceed 30,000 sq. ft. Mr. Warren and Mr. Duncan suggested the EDC submit a placeholder for a warrant to increase the zoning allotment for a grocery store prior to the deadline. Mr. Maiore asked that final sq. ft recommendation be contingent on future discussions with Planning Board and BOS. The Committee voted unanimously to submit the placeholder. There was further discussion on the permitting process since it has many complications as well. Mr. Chapman suggested having the size be by right, requiring the 15K to be increased to at least 40K. Mr. Maiore suggested that size may have a hard time achieving 2/3 vote at TM. Mr. Scanlan stated a by right permit could be a viable option and also recommended developing a strategy for what we, as a Town, want to do with the C District. Mr. Scanlan has spoken with a few business owners and commented the consistent feedback was of a negative image the Town has towards business. It was determined that Mr. Stevens would inform the BOS and Planning Board.

5. EDC Open Forum

The Committee discussed potential dates for the EDC Open Forum. It was determined an ideal date would be prior to the Town Meeting in the last two weeks of March.

6. The Committee voted unanimously to approve Minutes from the previous EDC Meeting
7. Meeting adjourned

Amended and Approved: Feb. 27, 2014