

Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, October 28, 2014 7:00 PM
Old Library, 7 Fairbank St., Harvard, MA

MINUTES

Members present: Rich Maiore, Chairman, Peter Warren, Duncan Chapman
Members absent: Elaine Lazarus

Present: Don Graham

1. Minutes

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the October 14, 2014 meeting as amended.

2. Review September 22 Planning Board Forum

The Committee discussed the forum held by the Planning Board on Sept. 22 regarding the maximum size of a grocery store. Mr. Warren stated that a lot of what was said at the forum was similar to the comments made at the EDC's June forum, such as noise, trash, lighting, dirt piles and architectural design. He stated that the September forum was a chance for North Harvard residents to vent, and the forum in June was more constructive. He stated that a lot of the concerns raised relative to the C District could be addressed by the Planning Board. Mr. Maiore stated he found the forum very helpful. He stated the grocery store issue always comes up and he thought the issue needed clarity as to what the Town wants. He stated that the question needed to be asked, and it seems that the Town is not generally in favor so the Committee can move on from this issue. He stated that a 2/3 vote at town meeting for a zoning change is a high bar. Mr. Warren stated he understands the concerns, but proposes to leave the 30,000 sq. ft. maximum size by special permit alone and change the by right maximum size of 15,000 sq. ft. to 20,000 sq. ft., which would allow the Town to have a small concept store. Ms. Lazarus stated that she understands the reason for the proposal, but thinks that the Committee should move on from this issue and not propose any changes to the bylaw. She stated the question had to be asked and she respects what people had to say. She recommended that the Committee move on to other aspects of its mission. Mr. Maiore noted that there seemed to be more concern about the change in by-right size than special permit size, and he also feels that the Committee should not recommend a change.

Mr. Warren noted that the C District looks bad, and there doesn't appear to be any willingness to make improvements. Mr. Maiore suggested that perhaps some of that can be addressed in the development plan that is part of the Committee's mission. The current appearance and availability of commercial space and vacant parcels in the District were discussed.

The Committee discussed preparing a development plan, noting that it could take off where the Master Plan ends, and incorporate the results of the business survey currently underway. It was

noted that with the general aging of the Town's population, the C District might need to accommodate different businesses than in the past, such as more medical uses.

In response to a question, Mr. Graham stated that the people present at the September forum were against a large grocery store. He noted it is important to raise issues and discuss them.

Mr. Maiore noted that since one member is absent, he recommends holding off on making a formal recommendation to the Planning Board regarding the grocery store issue until all members have a chance to participate in the discussion.

Adjourned: 7:45 PM

Elaine Lazarus, member

Documents used at the meeting: Draft minutes of the 9/9/14 EDC meeting