

Economic Development Committee
October 19, 2011 @ 6:30 p.m.
Sturbridge Town Hall – Conference Room #2

Meeting Minutes

The meeting convened at 6:35 PM

Present: Don Miller (DM), Heather Hendrick (HH), Sherri Pelski (SP), Dave Holland (DH). Absent: Kevin MacConnell.

Guests: Shaun Suhoski, Town Administrator (SS); Angeline Ellison (AE), Board of Selectmen Liaison.

SS requested the committee to organize as its first article of business and called for nominations for Chairman. The membership preferred to have a full Committee present, but, proceeded so that the meetings could be structured.

Motion: SP/DH to nominate and elect Heather Hendrick as Chairman. HH indicated she would do so temporarily as the full membership was not present. SS asked for any other nominations. None offered. Vote: 4-0.

HH now chairing the meeting.

Motion: HH/DH to nominate and elect Sherri Pelski as Vice Chairman. No other nominations. Vote: 4-0.

Motion: SP/DH nominate and elect Don Miller to serve as Clerk. No other nominations. Vote: 4-0. SS to take minutes for first meeting and DM thereafter. DM outlined his process of draft and final approval of minutes.

The EDC and guests spent substantial time in roundtable format discussing individual perceptions of economic development needs of the community. There was discussion concerning the mission and role of the committee, potential business opportunities, need for upscale retail and a walk-able, beautiful community.

DH questioned whether the committee would be more appropriately named as an advisory committee given its role and lack of authority to actually implement policy or projects. SS said the Board of Selectmen would likely be open to a refinement in the Committee name if requested.

HH then focused the group on discussion of next meetings and information to be reviewed and discussed.

The EDC agreed to a standing monthly meeting on the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. and to hold special meetings as needed.

The next meeting was scheduled for November 16 at 6:30 p.m. SS will have a room reserved. Future meeting agendas to be approved by HH and emailed to DM to ensure open meeting law posting requirements met.

The EDC discussed several ideas that should be further explored:

Strong consensus towards exploring the hiring of a part-time economic development coordinator, or, business development coordinator. DM noted that Selectman Gimas has been advocating same. SS stating that the EDC needs to determine the type of economic development professional and tailor the position description to Sturbridge's needs. SS to provide a sample job descriptions for next meeting.

The EDC also engaged in lengthy discussion concerning the Route 15 area and its potential for development, and the Route 20 corridor and how it could become more vital. SS noted that the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board have voted and initiated the "Commercial Tourist District Revitalization Plan" for Route 20, and that the Board of Selectmen had reviewed wastewater and water extension projects for Route 15. The cost of the wastewater was prohibitive, but, the extension of water infrastructure should be further assessed. Town zoning also limits what can be developed along Route 15.

The EDC plans to invite the Town Planner to its December meeting to discuss ongoing developments and zoning implications for these districts.

The EDC will also plan to attend an upcoming Sturbridge Tourist Association meeting to understand the relationship between the committees and to avoid overlap. Suggestion was made by DM to meet with Planning Board to better understand zoning along Rte 15 and to meet with Assessor to further understand the tax "formula" of resident vs commercial vs industrial.

SS to be sure all EDC members have the most recent Board and Committee Handbook and will look for a summary of parliamentary procedure for the membership.

Motion: SP/DH to adjourn. Voted: 4-0. Adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Shaun A. Suhoski, Acting Clerk
Town Administrator

***Approved at Dec 21, 2011, EDAC meeting