



TOWN OF UPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: April 6, 2023

Location: Remote only

A: Call to Order

Having a quorum, the meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

B: In Attendance

Committee Members:

- Gene Bernat, Vice Chair
- David Brooks
- Pierre Cote
- Dave Ross, Chair
- Craig Weinfuss – not present
- Katherine Worsham

- Michael Antonellis, Town Planner
- Anthony di Verdi, guest

C: Discussion

1. Approve minutes from February 2, 2023

The minutes from February 2, 2023 were approved by unanimous vote of members present.

2. Town Planner report

- New Town website: no update on an EDC-specific page. Plan is it will have a direct URL and a custom user experience.
- Façade improvement: still only one application, and one response that didn't follow up. Michael will use the Business Directory for more targeted outreach.

3. Update on projects

- Community Center: Opening dates have been provided by Town Manager. Gene expressed a belief that the view from the CC windows will emphasize the need for redevelopment. David is concerned that there should be a single centralized reservation system, for both recurring and one-off events, for the Center's spaces. Katherine said an online system is being developed (and later sent the URL). For-profit organizations will not be permitted; we identified some resulting gray areas and will review again later.
- Grove Street bridge: will there be a public meeting where we can provide design input? Dave Ross to ask town staff.
- Pedestrian bridge: We do not plan to ask Town Meeting for funding, but rather use state ED money (see below). The process will then be simpler and more predictable.

4. Update on Housing Production Plan

There was a public forum that included the HPP committee and a small number of members of the public. Still the attendees were fully engaged; the survey's over 300 responses were useful and there was a clear trend to desiring more high-density housing. The committee is working to identify parcels to support HD housing with design variety and open space.

5. EDC Focus Projects

- Parklet: Michael showed the design. One open item is whether to build a short footbridge over the wetland near the northern end, or continue the footpath all the way to the end, where it can lead directly onto the Church Street lot (or both). A bridge would be more expensive and could be added later. Decision will come from the BoS and the EDC will decide how to promote it. The committee was happy with the design.
- Holy Angels: the town has a strong consensus to save the church. Although the RFP process failed, the town can more easily drive an Expression of Interest process. We expect a new preservation committee will drive the process. EDC can advise, but will otherwise be freed to address economic development in general. Michael and Joseph to drive the EOI, aiming for a draft after Town Meeting.

6. Chapter 268 funding

After the footbridge is funded the town will still have about \$100,000 local recovery money. Although several ideas were discussed, the sense of the meeting was to focus on areas unlikely to be funded in other ways. Notable among these are: update the downtown vision, finish the parking design, identify sidewalk opportunities, analyze infrastructure gaps in C&I zones. Michael will address some of these.

7. Other business

A resident wants to cultivate marijuana outdoors, outside the overlay zone. A zoning change would require a town meeting vote, and outdoor growing seems not to be permitted by the zoning regulations (although outdoor growth was not specifically forbidden in the 2019 votes). It was not clear who would convey these conclusions to the applicant; no action is needed from the EDC.

8. Public Comment

Anthony di Verdi introduced himself. He attended the meeting to help decide whether to join the committee.

D: Committee Actions and Action Items

1. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2023 meeting. The motion was approved unanimously by members present.
2. Dave Ross to verify date of public meeting for Grove Street bridge (completed Apr 8: the meeting will be at the BoS Apr 18 meeting).
3. Michael and Joseph Laydon to initiate the EOI process for Holy Angels.

E: Next Meeting

The next committee meeting will be on Thursday May 11, 2023, at 7 pm.

F: Meeting Adjourned

Upon unanimous vote of those present, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted

David Brooks