



Economic Development Committee Minutes

February 13, 2024

12:00 PM

These are the minutes of the EDC meeting of 2/13/2024, held virtually via Zoom.

Called to Order: 6:01 pm

EDC Members Present: Catherine Usoff, Patty Sutherland, Dan Malloy, Sharon Tchon Gruet, Shirley Ming

EDC Members Absent: Michael Carpenter, Ann Chang, David Cote, James Fuccione

Also present: Julie Pierce

Preliminaries

Catherine read the preamble for the meeting.

Call the Roll – attendance is noted above.

I. Regular Business

- Review of meeting minutes from previous meeting February 2nd, 2024.
- Meeting minutes were approved by all members in attendance.

II. New Business

- **EDC 2023 Annual Report** – Catherine discussed the preparation of the EDC Annual Town Report and commented that it was easier to prepare this year because we have produced comprehensive meeting notes throughout the year. All attendees agreed the annual report was ready to be submitted.
- **Additional Meeting Dates to Support Town Meeting** - Catherine shared the timeline for materials and warrants for Town meeting. February 22nd is the last date for submission of citizen warrants. To be prepared to support activities (e.g., getting in front of the Select Board with the EDC's perspective on a pending issue) related to town meeting, the EDC will schedule a meeting for 3/15 at noon in addition to our regularly scheduled meetings on 3/1 and 4/5. It is possible that some warrant materials may be available before 2/22 and Julie will investigate if we can get early access for items of relevance for the EDC.

- Given the increased activity in preparation for the Town Meeting, the EDC will postpone the visit with Haartz until after the Town Meeting.

- **Tax Incentive Financing (TIF) Request – Natural Stonewall LLC**

Julie provided context for the requested TIF from Natural Stonewall LLC (which came to the town manager) and wanted to get the EDC perspective on this request and whether we wanted to be proactive in supporting it. The petition would need to be approved at the Town Meeting if it went forward.

Natural Stonewall is a landscape design company with 5 employees based in both Concord and Acton. Their request for tax relief would be in exchange for an expansion of their Acton facility and increasing their staffing to 25 FTEs.

After much discussion, the EDC did not feel this request aligned with our stated mission (support the expansion of the commercial tax base in Acton) and would not take a position on the request. Particularly with the current fiscal shortfall and potential request for an override at the Town Meeting, the request would add to the Town's economic strain.

Our efforts between now and town meeting will remain focused on items that align with our 2024 objectives. If the Select Board wants advice on this request, the EDC will prepare a summary of our discussion and the rationale for why this doesn't align with our charter.

Next Steps and Action Items

1. Catherine to post the 2023 EDC Annual Report
2. Catherine to re-schedule Haartz visit.
3. Julie will communicate to the town manager our decision to not take a position on the TIP request.
4. The next EDC meeting will be on 3/1 at noon via ZOOM.

Materials used in this meeting can be found at: <https://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-17585>

The meeting adjourned at 6:49 pm.

For more information about the Economic Development Committee, please send email to EDC@actonma.gov