



## Economic Development Committee Minutes

July 18, 2025

Town Hall

10:30 AM to 12:00 PM

Called to Order: 10:37 AM

**Present:** Patty Sutherland, Michael Carpenter, Sharon Tchon Gruet, Fran Arsenault (SB Liaison), Maura Haberman (ED Liaison), Patricia Costa, (Econ. Development Director), Jason Cole (Fin Comm Liaison). **Absent:** David Cote, Shirley Ming, James Fuccione (Planning Board Liaison)  
**Citizens present:** Miles Fidelman, Robert Jackson

### PRELIMINARIES

Call the Roll – attendance is noted above.

### I - REGULAR BUSINESS

- Review of meeting minutes from previous meeting (May 30, 2025): Passed unanimously
- Public participation: Miles Fidelman is currently in the application process to join the EDC. He reported that he has attended other EDC meetings in the past and his interest is in the redevelopment of the Nagog condos. He is currently working at Staples.

### II - NEW/SPECIAL BUSINESS

Office of Economic Development – Updates (Patricia)

- **Vacant Storefront Program with MassDevelopment:** An application has been submitted for a 50K grant on Great Road and included two letters of support from local artists. Awards announcement will be this fall.
- **New Businesses:** Acton-Boxborough Networks will be moving to 100 Discovery Way and been awarded an \$800k grant to hire 40 new professionals. On August 6th, the Office of Economic Development will meet with the Real Estate Director for ALDI to discuss their plans to open a new store in town. A new American-style restaurant will be moving into TJ's Plaza, next to the indoor golf facility. KJ's Caffe has closed, and the location is currently undergoing paperwork for a new eatery. Additionally, an Indian restaurant is set to open in Woods Plaza. J. Crew is now open leaving only one vacant store in the Trader Joes Plaza. A hot yoga studio will be opening in early September at Gould's Plaza.
- **Exchange Hall:** Conversations have started with the owner of Exchange Hall with the intent to strengthen the historical role of the building and integrate it into the broader network of historical assets in the South Acton District.
- **Banner Contest:** A banner contest is planned for early Fall. It is expected to engage residents, including local artists and students, to promote a visual identity for the different commercial hubs across town.
- **FY25/26:** The target areas are South Acton Great Road. Actions and projects are intended to address the vacant storefronts on Great Road and strengthen the potential of South Acton. Patricia noted that Sustainability has an opening for a 3-year full-time professional to conduct outreach who will help businesses with environmental solutions.
  - **Porchfest:** This is a Select Board goal and work will begin on it this fiscal year. Patricia would like the EDC to start thinking about it and to have eateries involved. Discussion/ideas shared included having live music on the patio of True West and having W. Acton merchants participate like Silver Unicorn. Sharon noted that she has

been to the W. Concord Porchfest and that when organizing this event, planning should include being mindful of traffic.

- **Restaurant Week:** Maura noted that Acton Restaurant Week will be from Sunday, Oct. 19 to Sunday, Oct. 26. Patty suggested that a script be put together for the EDC so they can help approach restaurants.

- Patty inquired about the Powder Mill area – roadwork/water and Patricia informed she met with business owners along Powder Mill to hear from the contractor about construction updates, next steps, and anticipated impacts. Patricia reported that a grant application was submitted to raise funds through Mass Development to help address the limited sewer capacity in town.
- Sharon asked about the food pantry which will be moved in the former Emergency Management building across the street from Exchange Hall
- Patricia noted that she is planning a Health and Wellness Fair for Gould's Plaza early Fall to help promote local businesses and stimulate foot traffic. The fair should include local stores and professionals in yoga, health and wellness.
- Patty wanted to know how the EDC can assist in these goals and support each initiative and proposed the designation of a sub-committee to address planning strategies.

### **III - OLD BUSINESS**

- **Member Updates:** Patty informed the committee that Greg Jarboe has stepped down and Jason Cole will be the new Finance Committee Representative. On behalf of the EDC, Patty expressed appreciation for Greg's 18 months of service including introductions to the Town of Maynard and his work on the upcoming Acton Restaurant Week. Robert Jackson has completed his interview and is awaiting the next step. Patricia will follow-up with Greg Hutchins (VCC) on applicants.
- **EDC Feedback - Outreach/Communication Plan (Mike/Dave):** Mike reported he sent the plan out to EDC shell after the last meeting but did not receive any feedback. Patty reviewed it and she is on board with the plan. Patty will check with Shirley, then setup an implementation plan: action plan; then order of events. The Business Boost email is helping get the word out. When approaching participants for Restaurant Week, highlight the ED Business Boost. Mike shared feedback on his experience and noted that it took three more times to meet with the Conservation Commission to create a rain garden across the street from his business. He paid \$100k for Acton permitting process. The cost of being compliant is much higher in Acton, which leaves zero incentive for businesses. Mike suggested putting together a list of upfront needs. Committees need to be aware that other communities are offering permits, and they should think outside their own committee, noting that improvement is costlier with zero incentive. Patricia asked Mike if he could provide a list of actions that he has taken. Patty would like to meet with Patricia and John Mangiaratti to understand the process over-complicated business and also suggested interviewing McGovern Auto.
- **Utility Boxes:** Sharon noted that the utility box by the ticket booth at Leary Field only needs to have school approval. She noted that the box has been primed and the ABRSD is excited. The ABRSD wants drafts of designs and they do the approval, with promotion and selection to give to the school committee. After discussion and realizing there is not much input of the EDC, Sharon is going to pull the utility box and just go directly to the schools.

### **IV - MORE REGULAR BUSINESS**

- **ED Events & Ribbon Cuttings.** Patricia will begin by implementing the banner program, followed by the rollout of planned initiatives targeting the Great Road Corridor and South Acton.
- **Ribbon Cuttings:** A policy will be put together for Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies moving forward.
- **Summer Concert Series:** Maura reported that the concerts are going well and a new promotion to support local eateries has been implemented.

- **Shop Small Acton:** Maura reported the dates for the upcoming Shop Small Acton will be one week prior to Thanksgiving through January 15. Work/support will be needed for a promo pack. This information can also be distributed when visiting eateries for Restaurant Week.
- **DEI and other Community Events:** No upcoming events have been reported.
- Updates from Town of Acton Boards and Committees (Liaisons):** Jason Cole (Fin Comm) was welcomed as the new liaison to the EDC by Patty. No reports were given.
- **Next meeting (ZOOM) – Friday, September 5 from 10:30 – noon. Note: No August meeting.**

#### **V- ACTION STEPS**

- Establish subcommittees for actions and projects pertaining to long-term planning for FY25/26 which will have The Great Road corridor and South Acton as target areas. (Patricia)
- Conduct follow up with current and new applicants to the EDC (Patty, Patricia)
- Box painting project will be coordinated under Acton-Boxborough schools (Sharon)
- Establish and publish guidelines and agenda for ribbon cuttings and milestone events (Maura, Patricia)
- Inform and engage eateries about Acton Restaurant Week (Maura, Patricia)

#### **Additional material:**

<https://doc.actonma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-19430>

The meeting was adjourned at 12:17 PM.

For more information about the Economic Development Committee, please send email to [EDC@actonma.gov](mailto:EDC@actonma.gov)