



## Economic Development Committee Minutes

Sep 5, 2025

Zoom

10:30 AM to 12:00 PM

Called to Order: 10:35 AM

**Present:** Patty Sutherland, Michael Carpenter, Shirley Ming, Fran Arsenault (SB Liaison), Patricia Costa, (Econ. Development Director), Jason Cole (Fin Comm Liaison), James Fuccione (Planning Board Liaison)

**Absent:** David Cote, Sharon Tchon Gruet, Maura Haberman (ED Liaison)

**Citizens present:** Deborah Diamond, Jeff Bergart

### **PRELIMINARIES**

Call the Roll – attendance is noted above.

### **I. Regular Business**

#### **I.I Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the July 18, 2025 meeting were unanimously approved.

#### **I.II Public Comments**

- **Deborah Diamond** proposed a Town Meeting article to waive the special permit requirement for home-based businesses employing one nonresident. Deborah shared that Kristen Guichard, while still in her role as Planning Director, felt that the proposal seemed to align with the strategic action plan and suggested administrative review as an alternative. Deborah cited statistics that at-home businesses have increased by 40% since 2020. Mike Carpenter and James Fuccione recommended forming a coalition of support among other similar businesses. Mark Carpenter expressed support. Patty Sutherland requested additional context on the bylaw (James to provide) and the proposed changes prior to further discussion, suggesting that a presentation similar to that made requesting EDC support of the leaf blower concern in 2023. Patricia Costa indicated that she could assist Deborah in identifying other permitted at-home businesses who would join her in support of a change in the bylaw at the 2026 Town Meeting. (Reference to document shared by Deborah Diamond with the EDC prior to the meeting).
- **Jeff Bergart**, a 48-year Acton resident, Council on Aging Board member (as well as other Town volunteer positions), raised concerns regarding limited communication among boards and committees citing decisions made surrounding the Bruce Freeman Trail, including safety issues related to un-helmeted rideshare use and obstructive signage (e.g., Wayfair). Patricia Costa noted that helmet-related concerns are being addressed with vendor. Jeff advocated for an EDC liaison to the boards/committees he represents. Patty Sutherland suggested that she and Jeff meet to discuss how communication may be improved between the EDC and the specific committees and boards Jeff represents as recruitment to full EDC membership continues.

### **II. New and Special Business**

#### **II.I Economic Development Updates (Patricia Costa)**

- **New Businesses & Ribbon Cuttings**  
Oct 17: Magenta Dance Place, J.Crew, Alligator Shot Tennis Boutique  
ALDI at 100 Powder Mill Road. Spring 2026 opening ~25 permanent jobs; permit approved August 26.
- **Newsletter Expansion**  
Mailing list increased from 323 to 470 recipients; includes hiring section.
- **South Acton Revitalization**  
Patricia started outreach with key stakeholders; Meeting will be scheduled soon to discuss action plan with the group and potential partnership with university aiming at one-on-one consultation to local businesses for store layouts and storefront upgrades.
- **Great Road Developments**  
New York Bagel & Wonder opening; Powers Gallery property for sale (limited seating due to sewer constraints has posed obstacles to interested businesses)
- **Banner Contest**  
Collaboration with DPW and Health Services to create visual identities for Acton neighborhoods  
Mike Carpenter suggested LogoTournament.com; James Fuccione recommended applying to the Mass Cultural Council

## **II.II Business Collaborations**

- “Seniors Night Out” at Velvet Vine Café. Event is in collaboration with Majestic Day Spa, and Vibrant Focus Unlimited, supported by the Senior Center and Economic Development Office
- Life Care Centers of America to host artwork from “Why We Art Museum”
- Porch Fest – Patricia stressed that involving local businesses can help extend the spirit of the music into the community by encouraging businesses to display thematic windows and goods that reflect the festival’s concept. Additional discussion on this matter was postponed due to time constraints on the agenda.
- **Restaurant Week (Oct 19–26)**  
Confirmed participants include Harris Hearth Breads, Silver Giral, Eve & Murray’s Farm to Home, Romano Pizza, Junior Pizza, El Huipil, and Bethencourt Bakehouse.
- **II.III NARA Summer Concert Series**  
Over 5,000 attendees; \$50K in revenue  
Promoted “Eat to NARA’s Beat” campaign

## **II.IV Grant Opportunities for 2026**

Patricia presented a list of potential grants relates to economic development, and the group was invited to suggest focus businesses and areas for application.

- Real Estate Services Technical Assistance
- Underutilized Properties Program
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
- Vacant Storefront Program
- Economic Development Incentive Program

## **III. Old Business**

### **III.I Outreach/Communication Plan (Mike Carpenter/Dave Cote)**

Patty Sutherland requested that this topic be introduced when both Mike Carpenter and Dave Cote could be present. Mike stated that he has distributed a proposed document to the EDC and is still seeking feedback.

### **III.II FY2026 Goals & Grant Strategy (Patricia Costa/EDC Members)**

- Establish subcommittees for long-term planning focused on Great Road and South Acton
- Follow-up with current and prospective EDC applicants. The membership of Robert Jackson is included on the Select Board agenda for September 8.

- Coordinate box painting project with Acton-Boxborough schools. Sharon Tchon Gruet to follow-up independently.
- Develop ribbon-cutting guidelines and event agendas  
Office of Economic Development has prepared and posted Guidelines For Ribbon-Cutting Ceremonies and an agenda of dates for FY 25/26. Document is posted to the public on Town website and has been distributed to EDC prior to meeting.
- Engage local eateries for Restaurant Week  
Patricia will share a list of eateries with EDC to help promote the event and boost registration. She is also exploring the possibility of posting a banner at South Acton Commuter Rail Station.
- Follow-up to meeting among Patricia Costa, Patty Sutherland and Maynard EDC Chair to cross-promote events. Maynard is hosting a Fall Country Fest on September 27 from 1 pm to 4 pm.

#### **IV. Additional Updates**

##### **IV.I ED Events (Patty Sutherland/Patricia Costa)**

- Ribbon cuttings: recent, upcoming, and prospective
- “Shop Small” campaign: Nov 27, 2025 – Jan 15, 2026

##### **IV.II Community Engagement (Patricia Costa)**

- DEI and immigration information requests
- Porch Fest: Fran Arsenault to follow-up with person who conceived of concept to provide Patricia Costa and Patty Sutherland with feedback on how ED/EDC can best support.
- Fran Arsenault coordinating with Alissa Nicole for Sept 9 evening event at Great Road Church

##### **IV.III Board & Committee Updates**

- Liaison reports

#### **V. Action Items**

- James Fuccione to provide current bylaw for review.
  - Update:  
Zoning Bylaws: 3.8.1.2  
“A home occupation, other than retail sales, conducted entirely within the DWELLING UNIT or an accessory BUILDING by a resident and employing no persons other than the residents. In the Village Residential District, the portion of the DWELLING UNIT or accessory BUILDING used for a home occupation shall be limited to 500 square feet of NET FLOOR AREA. The Board of Appeals may authorize by special permit a home occupation which 1) conducts retail sales, or 2) employs non-residents provided that no more than two such non-resident employees shall be present on the premises at any one time. In the SAV-1 and SAV-2 Districts, the restrictions on retail sales and resident employees shall not apply.”
- Patty Sutherland and Jeff Bergart to discuss committee collaboration.
- Patricia Costa to share webinar link and restaurant list.
- Fran Arsenault to bring Porch Fest content to next meeting.
- Patricia Costa and Patty Sutherland to explore ways to enhance public participation for efficiency.
- EDC members to recommend priority areas for grant applications.

**Next Meeting:** TBD for October, 2025 from 10:30am to 12pm.

**Adjourned:** 12:05 PM

**Contact:** EDC@actonma.gov