

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 20, 2024 @ 6:30 pm
Cordaville Hall Senior Center | 9 Cordaville Road, Southborough, MA 01772

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Robert Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:41 pm.

EDC present: Robert Anderson (RA), Khoi Nguyen (KN), Michael Moorehead (MM), Michael Nordstrom (MN)

Town staff present: EDC Coordinator Leah Emerson (LE)

Attendees present: Planning Board Chair Meme Luttrell (ML), Selectmen Sam Stivers (SS) & Marguerite Landry (MHL)

2. Reports

a. Chair

Opening remarks | Robert Anderson (RA) reminded everyone present of the upcoming Town Meeting on Sat. 3/23/24, which he was unable to attend due to travel commitments. He also reiterated the need for additional EDC recruits, given he and incumbent MM's terms expiring at the end of June 2024. RA also emphasized the [One Stop for Growth state grant program](#) relative to housing and updating the zoning along the Route 9 corridor to improve economic development in Southborough.

b. Member reports | None - KA was absent and unable to report.

c. EDC Coordinator

Business updates | LE informed the group that Hiller's Cleaners left downtown Southborough. The building owners had someone lined up for 3 Main Street without disclosing the new tenant. LE also paid a visit to a medical practice at 14 Main Street, West Suburban GI, to congratulate them on their new space and recent opening. Former EDC member Chris Robbins called LE over a previous weekend to bring attention to Hiller's Cleaners departure and requested an acknowledgement of the Baltas family, the longtime owners of the Southborough House of Pizza, which Selectman Kathy Cook was following up on.

Former EDC member Julie Connelly reached out to LE re: her gym, Stronger Uprising Personal Training, and their need for new lease space. They'd outgrown their space at 304 Turnpike, the owners had plans for the building, and their lease was expiring in May 2024. They had an agreement with Capital Group (CGP) properties for 134 Turnpike, but CGP failed to disclose their Res-A zoning restrictions. Although CGP obtained a zoning variance years prior for office use in the Res-A district, the variance would not allow for gym use under the town's bylaw and CGP's agreement with Stronger Uprising was rescinded.

LE met with gym co-owner Quinn Moynahan on her day off, Fri. 3/8/24, and Town Planner Karina Quinn met with Quinn the following Mon. 3/11/24 to discuss permitting requirements at alternate locations. Given their May moving date, LE recommended looking for locations in the I - Industrial zoning district, where 'indoor exercise, athletic and recreational facilities' are allowed by right. Due to their required square footage of 3,000 s.f. only a major site plan review would be required by the Planning Board. It was verified that the use is precluded in the IP - Industrial Park zoning district. All other commercial zoning districts require a special permit from the ZBA, which would add another month to the entitlement process in addition to approx. one month for major site plan approval by the Planning Board. LE recommended 32 School Street, adjacent to Reliant Medical, owned by a Maryland Property Group who acquired the parcels from Tony Kwan. She also referred Quinn to Ferris Development Leasing Manager Ryan O'Toole re: available space at 118-120 Turnpike. Reportedly, Ferris had noise concerns from the gym use and were unable to

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accommodate them. The gym owners then pursued space at a Turnpike address that had outstanding code violations. Until those were resolved, the property owners didn't have a certificate of occupancy, rendering the location infeasible. Ultimately, the gym couldn't find adequate space and pursued a location in Westborough. LE and RA discussed challenges in finding suitable industrial space for indoor recreation facilities. LE said that she and planning staff did what they could to assist Stronger Uprising. Only zoning amendments in the commercial zoning districts outside of the Downtown District may provide relief under similar circumstances in the future.

CPTC annual meeting | LE briefly touched on her attendance at the [Citizen Planner Training Collaborative](#)'s annual meeting on Sat. 3/16/24 at Holy Cross University in Worcester. RA asked which workshops she attended, which were 'Planning for Community Support' for future EDC outreach, presented by Planner Judi Barrett; '[Laurel and Hardy Go to Planning School](#)' where 'home rule' and real world scenarios meet, presented by Judi Barrett and Attorney Barbara Saint-Andre; and '[Planning for Historic Preservation: Moving from Reactive to Proactive](#)' presented by MA Historical Commission [Local Government Programs Coordinator Jennifer Doherty](#).

MBTA Communities | LE invited Planning Board Chair Meme Luttrell (ML) to brief the EDC on MBTA 3A compliance status. ML explained setbacks to their timeline due to formula miscalculations by a state approved/assigned 3rd party 3A compliance consultant. The Planning Board had to pull the item from Town Meeting in March with plans to present the proposed zoning overlays and corresponding bylaw at a special Town Meeting in the fall. The proposed zoning overlays are unlikely to change except in Southville, nearest the train station, being the most complex due to the area's historic existing non-conforming lots. ML mentioned the need for 150 units but only had 49, highlighting the challenge of meeting demand while satisfying zoning requirements. Additionally, ML said that pushback on density and unit capacity from Southville residents, who have been the most vocal and actively engaged in the public hearing process, required careful consideration for overlay placement and location.

EDC member KN asked how this compared to the situation in Milton, MA where citizens petitioned to repeal previously approved 3A compliance measures. Milton, MA residents lobbied to change their town's MBTA classification to reduce the amount of multifamily zoning by-right commensurate with their use of MBTA transit. LE and RA said that the circumstance is particular to Milton and isn't representative of scenarios in other towns. LE recommended a WBUR interview radio segment re: opposition in Milton for a more nuanced take on the matter. She did say that an attorney on the North Shore was whipping up opposition to 3A compliance in an effort to resist state control, inappropriately citing the case in Milton in support of their views.

The group then discussed the potential for a zoning overlay to allow for mixed use and multifamily developments in light of underutilized properties along Route 9. RA and MM felt that additional height is advisable along certain stretches of Route 9, although RA noted that a four-story building isn't feasible without water and sewer infrastructure, which adds to a developers' financial burden combined with the additional uncertainty presented by current zoning. LE asked that the Planning Board consider Master Plan goals that include these measures in the zoning overlay selection process for MBTA 3A compliance, particularly along the Route 9 corridor. ML said that introducing mixed use with multifamily by-right along Route 9 didn't help meet minimum multifamily capacity requirements, and that it presented more complexity than the Planning Board had time to consider under state compliance deadlines. Therefore the Planning Board would have to consider mixed use separately at a future date post-MBTA compliance.

Potential One Stop grant applications | LE has advocated for One Stop grant opportunities, offering to coordinate with committees, boards, and departments, but these groups ultimately determine whether to pursue a One Stop grant application in conjunction with Town Administration, approved by the Select Board. LE invited Selectman

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Marguerite Landry (MHL) to discuss a potential grant application for affordable housing at a town-owned property on Atwood Street with EDC Chair Rob Anderson (RA), who works for MassDevelopment. MHL briefed the EDC about residual lead contamination at the town-owned property on Atwood, which formerly housed a DPW water tank onsite. MHL detailed the steps taken by DPW Superintendent Bill Cundiff to have a 3rd party consultant test the soil for residual contamination from the water tank years after its removal. Neighbors are concerned after testing revealed high levels of lead in the soil at specific depths, the result of practices from decades prior, including the use of lead paint materials. MHL said that Bill Cundiff is the person for RA to speak with re: available grants for brownfield remediation and cleanup.

RA debated the possibility of a One Stop grant for site remediation to enable the development of affordable housing on Atwood Street, before recalling that property owners responsible for contamination are ineligible to apply for relief through this particular grant program under One Stop. With the prevalence of industrial impacts, LE questioned the fairness of preventing the entity responsible for pollution, based on the limited knowledge and 'best practices' of the time, from receiving assistance with remediation. Many cities and towns are saddled with municipally owned brownfield properties statewide. RA's co-worker at MassDevelopment suggested that the entire state of Massachusetts is a brownfield site due to its industrial history and corresponding development. RA mentioned a brownfield redevelopment fund that was recently implemented by the state, as well as the underutilized property program, a valuable resource for both public and private sector applicants, being the only grant program where the latter can apply.

LE mentioned the possibility of assessing multiple municipally owned properties for a real estate technical services grant under One Stop, such as bundling 21 Highland and the former Flagg Street School for consideration at the same time. RA indicated that site readiness technical assistance is available to help municipalities dispose of underutilized properties through an RFP or auction, with the help of a grant from MassDevelopment. RA continued the conversation about acquiring property for affordable housing and advised seeking free money through grants before pursuing debt and financing services for development and site acquisition.

Wastewater treatment | CR's [report on the status of the Route 9 wastewater grant](#) was provided [via email](#), including funds to be used for the town's grant match. LE then mentioned a [West Newbury wastewater report](#) funded under a prior One Stop Downtown Initiative grant. She said that a similar report could be useful and applicable to downtown Southborough provided the town's interest in further study of wastewater solutions.

4. Public Comment | SS shared current constraints for wastewater management in Westborough. They're looking to expand treatment capacity in the near future to accommodate life science development. Although talks are preliminary, SS said Westborough's Town Manager expressed mild interest in Southborough joining their efforts toward an intermunicipal solution. MHL underscored the complexity of intermunicipal agreements and wondered if Westborough wastewater treatment plant manager Veolia would need to weigh in on such projects. She guessed that they would.

5. Administrative

A. Approval of 1/24/24 draft meeting minutes, with 11/29 and 12/20/23 minutes tabled to the following meeting.

MOTION: MM moved to approve the meeting minutes from 1/24/24, seconded by MN.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: M Moorehead-Aye, M Nordstrom-Aye, K Nguyen-Aye, R Anderson-Aye (4-0-0)

B. Schedule next meeting on 5/1/24 - subsequently canceled and rescheduled to 5/15/24.

6. Adjourn

MOTION: MM moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 pm, and seconded by RA.
M Moorehead-Aye, M Nordstrom-Aye, K Nguyen-Aye, R Anderson-Aye (4-0-0)

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REFERENCED ITEMS | DOCUMENTS at 3/20/24 EDC Meeting

- 1) [MA One Stop for Growth grant program](#)
- 2) [CPTC 2024 Annual Meeting Materials](#)
- 3) [EOEEA Route 9 Wastewater Grant Report](#) Part B, prepared by Claire Reynolds
- 4) [Email EOEEA Route 9 Wastewater Grant update](#) from Town Consultant Claire Reynolds, dated 3/20/24
- 5) [West Newbury May 2018 Downtown Wastewater Case Study sample report](#)