

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday, July 18, 2024 @ 6:30 pm

Beals Preserve

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

6 Meeting Summary | The meeting centered around zoning updates, housing production, and collaborating with the Planning Board in Southborough. LE emphasized the importance of zoning updates to satisfy the 2021 Master Plan Implementation goals. Although not mutually exclusive, LE, CR and the committee discussed the tension between preserving open space and the need for economic development to counter the increased residential tax burden (*currently 83.7%*), which has exponentially increased in recent years both before and after the pandemic. The group reviewed potential locations for an art gallery, touched on Westborough's expansion of their wastewater treatment facility, and referred to various studies and reports related to development and wastewater considerations for Route 9 in Southborough. The EDC also considered zoning issues and the pursuit of grants for the purposes of zoning updates to meet current needs with appropriate, right-sized, sustainable development.

16 1. Call to Order

EDC Coordinator Leah Emerson called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

EDC present: Karen Anglim (KA), Khoi Nguyen (KN), Michael Nordstrom (MN)

Town/Contract Staff present: EDC Coordinator Leah Emerson (LE), Town Consultant Claire Reynolds (CR)

Partial Attendee: Lawrence Spezzano (LS), Vice President, Southborough Open Land Foundation

(public comment)

22 2. Reports

Coordinator - Apothecary Artists relocation | LE provided possible locations for Apothecary Artists, an art studio downtown that needed to relocate from their original location. They were able to secure a lease downstairs at 11 Main Street with late August-early September move-in date. In the meantime, LE consulted with Town Planning to determine what, if any, review or entitlement would be required for their specific use at that location. KA then mentioned that Tomasso's Trattoria and Enoteca at White's Crossing suddenly closed and hopes that another restaurant will soon occupy the space.

Walker Development - Adult Daycare application at 337 Turnpike | LE reported that a new adult daycare at 337 Turnpike Road was recently approved per Town Planner Karina Quinn (KQ), which required a major site plan review from the Planning Board and a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. KQ said that Chris Lund, the new Building Commissioner, was detailed and thorough in response to the daycare's needs, including accommodations for a neurodiverse population. The adult daycare is located on the first floor, with additional suites for lease and new owner Walker Development's offices located on the second floor. Walker Development recently relocated their headquarters from Marlborough to Southborough, having acquired the former Trask Development building. LE planned to send them a welcome note on behalf of the EDC.

One Stop FY25 application and FY26 proposed application (Rt 9 zoning review) | LE provided information on the One Stop FY25 grant application, including an asset inventory of the downtown area for the purposes of wayfinding in preparation for the Town's 2027 Tricentennial. For the upcoming FY26 One Stop grant cycle in early to mid-2025, LE said that Select Board co-chairs Andrew Dennington and Kathy Cook are taking up the zoning issues after Julie Connolly's article on MySouthborough.com re: her gym's dilemma and subsequent relocation to Westborough. As a result, Andrew Dennington was going before the Planning Board on 7/22/24 to make the case for a One Stop grant application for a Route 9 corridor study, seeking recommendations to

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44 update uses and amend single use provisions to allow for mixed use in the commercial zones along the
45 corridor.

46 **Discussion of current commercial zoning** | LE shared zoning information with the EDC, including a current
47 zoning map and corresponding sections of the zoning bylaw pertaining to Southborough's commercial
48 districts, so that the committee can better understand local zoning laws and their impact on property use and
49 the local business economy. LE pointed out that residential areas near commercial corridors are a common
50 occurrence in Southborough, and the town's zoning bylaws have evolved to accommodate these changes
51 over the years.

52 **3. Discussion (vote taken)**

53 **Review of EDC Charter** | LE outlined some of the EDC's goals, progress, and next steps. She compared EDC
54 committee structures in Southborough and Westborough, highlighting differences in membership and roles.
55 LE provided an outline from Westborough's EDC, listing basic requirements, duties and responsibilities from
56 their members. LE suggested identifying and organizing businesses and municipal sites in different areas of
57 town for outreach, engagement and ongoing relationship building. LE said that if EDC members can each
58 familiarize themselves with a specific area of town, the committee would be in a stronger position to
59 advocate for local businesses. The EDC then discussed the need for a committee chair after Rob Anderson's
60 departure.

61 **MOTION:** KA moved to make Michael Nordstrom the Chair of the EDC, seconded by KN.

62 K Anglim-Aye, K Nguyen-Aye, M Nordstrom-Aye (3-0-0)

63 **FY24 and FY25 Budget, Contract for services - CCR Consulting** | CR discussed the \$45,000 EOEEA grant, the
64 \$3,000 for in-kind services applied toward the Town's grant match from EDC FY24 funds, and the \$6,100
65 remaining applied to a second report addressing wastewater capacity on Route 9 and downtown, the
66 Lombardo Associates Wastewater Management Action Plan, finalized in July 2024. LE and CR prefaced the
67 Lombardo Associates report, which provides detailed information on wastewater options for the Town to
68 consider. LE mentioned that if the EDC wants to retain CR's services for FY25 to further this and other
69 EDC-related work, a contract with a not-to-exceed amount based on an average from prior year invoices is
70 advisable. This alleviates the administrative burden of one-off contracts with discrete expiration dates, based
71 on feedback from Town Administration and Accounting re: contracts and services to-date.

72 **4. Art on the Trails at Beals Preserve**

73 **Public Comment** | Lawrence Spezzano (LS), Vice President of the Southborough Open Land Foundation
74 (SOLF), stopped by and provided background and comment on the history of Beals Preserve, donated by the
75 Beals family and set aside as open space and conservation land, home to the 8th annual Art on the Trails
76 onsite art installation. LS also recommended visiting another SOLF property, Bigelow Wildlife Refuge, for
77 birdwatching and nature walks. LS discussed land management, volunteer opportunities for trail and property
78 maintenance, the cleanup of overgrown areas, establishment of a native pollinator garden, and the
79 installation of art and picnic tables at the Preserve. LS offered to provide an extra perspective if the EDC
80 would like to arrange a walking tour at some point in the future.

81 **5. Administrative**

82 A. 3/20/24, 5/15/24 and 5/22/24 meeting minutes - tabled to next EDC meeting.

83 B. Next meeting TBD via scheduling poll for August 2024.

84 C. Adjourn

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85 **MOTION:** MN moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm, seconded by KN.

86 K Anglim-Aye, K Nguyen-Aye, M Nordstrom-Aye (3-0-0)

87

88

89 REFERENCED ITEMS | DOCUMENTS at 7/18/24 EDC Meeting

90

- 91 1) [Walker Development Article](#) | Worcester Business Journal, July 8, 2024
- 92 2) Proposed [FY26 One Stop grant application for Route 9 briefing materials](#) | July 2024
- 93 3) Town of [Southborough Commercial Zoning Map](#)
- 94 4) [Southborough EDC Charter \(2017\)](#)
- 95 5) [Westborough EDC recruitment criteria](#)

July 8, 2024

Walker Development moving HQ from Marlborough to Southborough, in expansion effort



PHOTO | ERIC CASEY

Workers hang a Walker Development sign on the roof of the company's new headquarters in Southborough on June 27.

By Eric Casey

Walker Development and Construction Management, a Marlborough-based construction and project management firm, is preparing to move into its new headquarters on Route 9 in Southborough as part of the 10-year-old firm's expansion efforts.

The company purchased 337 Turnpike Road in Southborough for \$5.1 million in a deal finalized in December, according to Worcester District Registry of Deeds records. The firm is building out an office space for its use on the building's second floor and installed a new sign on the building's facade on June 27.

The company was founded in 2014 by co-principals Jeff Walker, a former vice president of Waltham-based construction firm Vantage Builders who serves as CEO of the company, and Nick Poirier, a former project manager at Vantage who serves as Walker's president. Spurred on by conversations the two had regarding their visions on how to run a company, Walker and Poirier started their own firm.

Prominent projects that Walker Development has been involved in since include an extensive renovation of the Firefly's BBQ restaurant in Marlborough, the renovation of former EMC office space in Hopkinton into 30,000 square feet of modern office and laboratory space for clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company Spring Bank Pharmaceuticals, and construction of new office space for the nonprofit Greater Worcester Community Foundation in the One Mercantile Street building in Worcester.

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"We really built the company with the idea of supporting commercial brokers and landlords, mainly for renovations," Walker said. "So we have a lot of great relationships with the people making the deals, and that helps us."

Although the company has been involved in projects from New Hampshire to Rhode Island, Walker estimates 80% of its business occurs inside the I-495 belt in Massachusetts.

The region's growth has led to growth at Walker Development; the company's headcount has expanded to 47 since 2014. The move to a company-owned property allows the firm to solidify its headcount under one roof with room for future expansion, said Walker.

"We're interested in investing in commercial real estate and development, so that piece of it helped," he said. "But it did really solidify a space for us. Now we'll all be under one roof, with the ability to expand."

Walker Development typically deals with projects with price tags under \$10 million. Clients are beginning to ask for help with bigger projects, and the company is eyeing opportunities to get involved in projects from the ground up, instead of focusing on renovations. Getting into more multi-family projects offers another avenue for expansion, said Walker.

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For now, much of the focus is on the build out of the new Southborough headquarters, which is expected to be completed this year. Despite the unique opportunity to be involved in all aspects of the space's design and construction, Walker said he wouldn't describe it as fun.

"It reminds you of the challenges our clients deal with," he said. "It's definitely much easier if you're just constructing the space for someone else, [compared to] when you're making the decisions and making the decisions of where people are going and how the space should look."

Eric Casey is a staff writer at Worcester Business Journal, who primarily covers the manufacturing and real estate industries.



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Town Zoning Bylaw

Section 174-8.C(2)

Current restrictions in the Business Highway, Business Village, Industrial and Industrial Park zone districts do not allow for mixed use proposals without a lengthy special permitting process:

- Not more than one principal permitted use shall be located on any lot

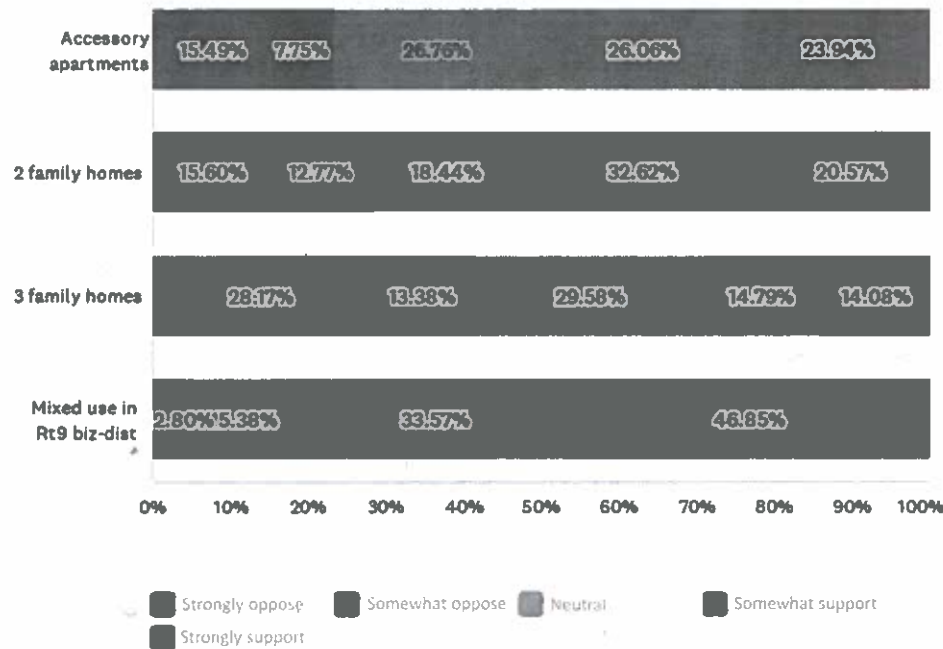
- Several different uses otherwise permitted in the district - or several buildings on the same lot if such uses or buildings are deemed to be compatible - are allowed by special permit only by the Planning Board or ZBA

USES SHOULD BE UPDATED to MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS POST-PANDEMIC



SUPPORT *for* ZONING UPDATES

Within existing height and setback restrictions, what is your level of support for each of the following types of by right zoning throughout Southborough?



Not only do over 80% of survey respondents 'somewhat' to 'strongly support' mixed use by right for Route 9 commercial districts, the majority are 'neutral' to 'supportive' of additional housing options townwide

2024 Community Satisfaction Survey
By Right Zoning



Source: Southborough Municipal Technology Committee, 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS *for* ZONING UPDATES

Southborough 2021 Master Plan Implementation Goals

ED 3.0 | *Develop an economically strong, diverse & self-sustaining business community i.e., an economic engine along the Route 9 corridor*

- 1 ED 3.2 | Increase commercial tax revenue by reducing office space vacancies and encouraging development on targeted, high-potential sites (such as Dell Technologies).
- 2 ED 3.7 | Explore the opportunity, in collaboration with the Planning Board (PB), to revise zoning regulations for Route 9, to allow for mixed use development and taller buildings with the aim of reducing vacancy rate and providing expanded amenities to offices and residents.
- 3 ED 3.9 | Evaluate options for resourcing the grant research and application process particularly for large scale projects which would be difficult or expensive for the Town to support on its own, including wastewater, connectivity and targeted development through DIF and other programs.
- 4 PS 3.6 | Evaluate options for more intensive commercial development along Route 9, including such activities as selective re-zoning, building wastewater treatment capacity etc.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS *for* ZONING UPDATES

Southborough 2019 Housing Production Plan

1 Provide housing options that attract families and enable older adults to remain in Southborough as their needs change.

2 Reinforce Southborough's economic goals by supporting local businesses through the provision of expanded housing choices that serve a diverse local workforce.

3 Encourage alternative housing styles to single family homes, such as townhouses, duplexes and small apt. buildings in contextually appropriate locations to provide residents with a wider range of housing options.

4 Maintain Southborough's character by supporting the design of housing development that is compatible with and complementary to the Town's architectural character and wooded landscapes.

5 Minimize impacts of new development on priority areas for open space, conservation and natural resource protection purposes.

6 Maintain and improve the condition of the Town's housing stock and encourage high quality new construction.

ONE STOP TIMELINE

FY26 Community Planning Grant Application *for a* Zoning Review and Route 9 Corridor Analysis
administered by the EOHLIC | Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities



FEEDBACK & GUIDANCE PHASE

Webinars and online office hours are held to provide an overview and specific guidance for each of the One Stop 13 grant programs that are available. Simple Expressions of Interest | EOI webforms may be submitted from Mar - Apr for feedback and suggestions in advance of a full application submittal.

COLLABORATIVE REVIEW PERIOD

Applications are not processed under specific grant programs, but are instead reviewed for multiple programs that best fit the funding needs of the project.

JAN

MAY - JUN

SEP - OCT

FEB - APR

JUN - AUG

STATE ONE STOP LAUNCHES

The official launch of the One Stop grant program typically coincides with the MA Municipal Association annual meeting held at the beginning of each year. Applicants may begin working on their applications but may not yet submit.

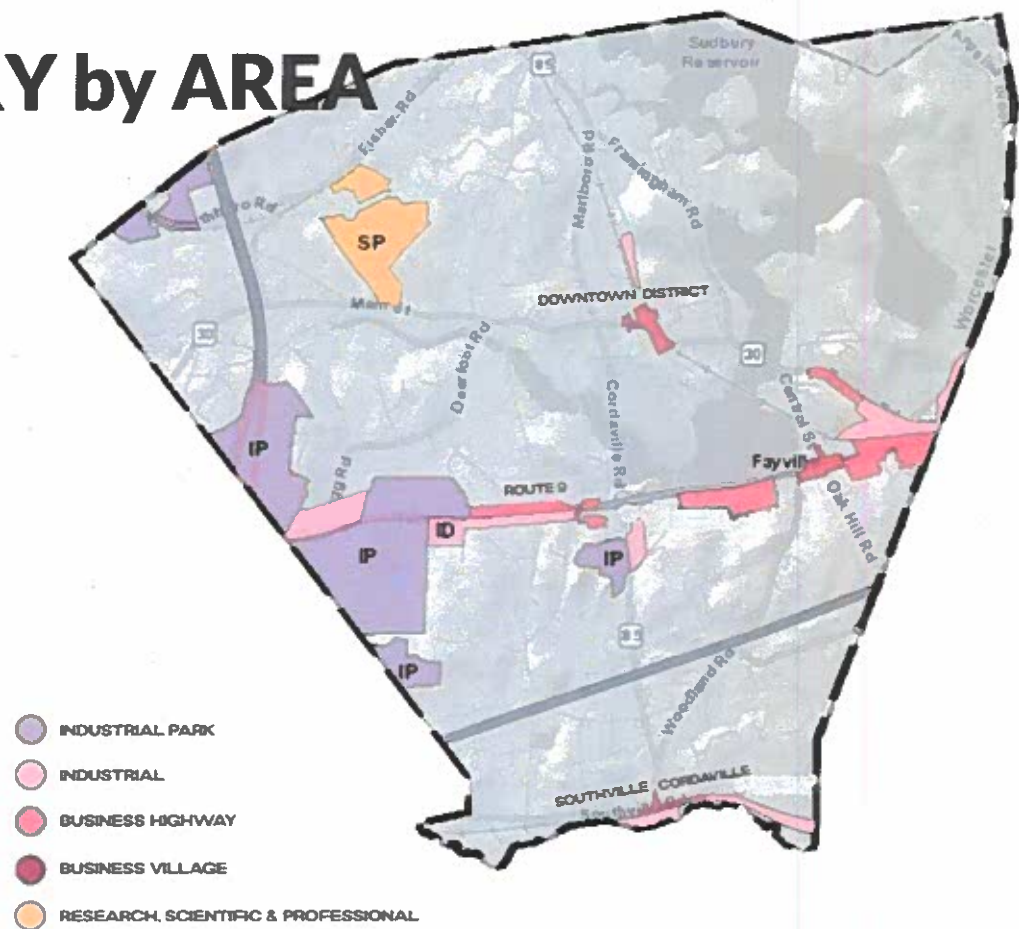
FULL APPLICATION SUBMITTAL PERIOD

The submission window typically opens the first week of May and closes the first week of June. This last year's submission period was from May 6 - Jun 5, 2024. There are no limits to the number of One Stop EOIs and full grant applications that can be submitted by a single applicant.

AWARD & POST-AWARD PHASE

The multistep collaborative review results in the recommendation of the most impactful projects across the state. Over the first three years of the One Stop program, 869 grants have been awarded totaling over \$396M with 52% of applicants receiving funding.

East and West of Route 85



Chapter 9. Committees

Article VII. Economic Development Committee

[Adopted 4-25-2017 ATM by Art. 25]

§ 9-27. Establishment; purpose.

The mission of the Southborough Economic Development Committee (EDC) is to stabilize residential taxes through the growth of the Town's commercial and industrial tax base while preserving the character and charm of Southborough. The EDC is established to expand and strengthen the local economy, promote job creation, and enhance the Town's quality of life through prosperous, balanced and sustainable economic development. The role of the EDC is to investigate current economic conditions, assist the Town with the creation and execution of appropriate economic development initiatives and marketing opportunities, coordinate activities to enhance or expand economic development, and engage in related activities as necessary to further EDC's mission and purpose.

§ 9-28. Membership of Committee.

[Amended 11-1-2021 STM by Art. 2]

The EDC is a volunteer committee consisting of members of the community who want to assist the Town in maintaining and enhancing a prosperous and sustainable economy. The EDC shall be comprised of no more than nine such persons who shall be appointed by the Select Board for staggered terms of three years, so that the term of office of at least one member expires each year. Efforts shall be made to include a broad representation of the community at large and all appointments shall be made on the basis of the individual's ability to assist in the purpose of the EDC and their willingness to serve.

Are you interested in getting involved? Consider volunteering!

Preferred Qualifications

1. Must live or work in Westborough
2. Must have 4-6 hours of availability per month, including:
 - a) 1.5 hours for EDC meetings
 - b) 2-3 hours for business meetings or 3-4 hours for outreach as needed
3. Interest in economic development and the Westborough EDC
4. Strong connections to local businesses



Duties and Responsibilities

1. Regularly attend EDC meetings
2. Lead outreach for various projects (e.g., Winter Stroll)
3. Assist the EDC Coordinator in identifying businesses for ambassador meetings and planning the agendas for those meetings
4. Lead ambassador meetings with Westborough businesses
5. Represent the EDC at events (e.g., Ribbon Cuttings, Business Expo)
6. Provide support to EDC working groups

The EDC is also working to revitalize its Ambassador Program:

- 1 **Educate businesses about the EDC** by providing a brief overview of the EDC's mission, makeup, and recent activities.
- 2 **Promote federal, state, and local resources** such as the EDC's Business Assistance Grant Program, the Shop Westborough directory, "One Stop" meetings, PACE Massachusetts, Worcester SCORE, the 495/MetroWest Partnership's supply chain directory, the Workforce Training Fund Program, and more!
- 3 **Identify opportunities to support Westborough businesses** by surfacing pain points, expansion plans, or relocation risk.