

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**Thursday, August 8, 2024 @ 6:30 pm****Moved to Town House, 17 Common Street, from Heritage Park**

as Noticed Onsite due to Rain / Inclement Weather

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

7 Meeting Summary: The EDC discussed the impact of zoning regulations on commercial businesses and housing affordability in Southborough, updates to the EDC tracker, meeting minutes, strategies to improve the EDC's recruitment and visibility efforts, and expectations from constituents. EDC members emphasized the importance of tracking milestones, resources in local government, and solutions to wastewater capacity.

12 1. Call to Order

EDC Chair Michael Nordstrom called the meeting to order at 6:46 p.m.

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

Town/Contract Staff present: EDC Coordinator Leah Emerson (LE)

16 2. Administrative

a) Housekeeping item | Approval of EDC signatories Chair M. Nordstrom and EDC Coordinator L. Emerson on ONE FORM per Town Accountant Carla McAuliffe

MOTION: KA moved to make Chair Michael Nordstrom and EDC Coordinator Leah Emerson signatories for EDC-related invoices, budget items, and EDC communications and correspondence, seconded by KN.

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

b) Review and approval of 3/20/24, 5/15/24 and 5/22/24 draft EDC meeting minutes

LE and KA discussed the approval of minutes, upcoming meetings, and venues. MN requested meeting materials via email a day or two in advance to allow enough time to review the information before the next meeting.

MOTION: MN moved to approve the EDC's March 20th, May 15th and May 22nd, 2024 draft meeting minutes, seconded by KA.

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

c) Review EDC Tracker | MN asked if there were any action items from the previous meeting. LE replied that the AI transcription may have some, but they need to be verified. LE said that the Otter.ai generated transcriptions of EDC meetings too often contain extraneous information, discussion topics out of order, without proper context, and with numerous inaccuracies, but that it was useful for prompting her memory and identifying action items. She said she would add action items to the tracker upon verification, as needed.

MN and LE discussed the importance of tracking developments as part of the EDC's charge in which the EDC has an interest. MN is concerned about short-term action items and following up on them. LE emphasized the differences between the private and public sector, which proceed at a vastly different pace due to the legal requirements governing local government processes. Practically speaking, MN and KN were also looking for the best way to access and share files using their Town Microsoft 365 account.

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40 **EDC Resources** | For the sake of productive meetings, LE also offered to share resources on Roberts Rules of
41 Order and Planetizen that would be helpful to the EDC. LE, KA and MN discussed zoning laws and their impact
42 on communities based on KA and MN's completion of the Planetizen course 'How Zoning Shapes Cities,
43 Regions and Communities' by Jenny Schuetz. Ms. Schuetz conducted research in 187 Massachusetts cities and
44 towns around greater Boston on a project led by zoning policy expert Amy Dain, principal of Dain Research. LE
45 recommended Amy Dain's report '[Exclusionary by Design](#)' re: well documented, well researched exclusionary
46 zoning practices in MA as well as her '[Upzone Update](#)' newsletter, published in partnership with the Boston
47 Foundation's research center, Boston Indicators.

48 **Implications for Housing and Local Businesses** | LE and KA discussed the impact of ADUs on single-family
49 zones in Massachusetts. KN agreed that it's important to bring back the flexibility of zoning laws to
50 accommodate changing lifestyles and demographics. They saw the potential for gentle density, the
51 importance of local regulations in implementing the new laws, as well as the complexity and challenges in
52 implementing updated zoning policies, particularly in the face of resistance from long-time residents.

53 The EDC are concerned that outdated zoning regulations in Southborough have led to business 'leakage' to
54 surrounding towns. In light of a recent loss of a fitness-based business, LE suggested advocating for zoning
55 amendments to allow more uses in the IP - Industrial Park zoning district, citing outdated use restrictions as a
56 reason for the gym's relocation to Westborough.

57 **MPIGs** | LE provided Planning Board member and Master Plan Implementation Committee chair Debbie
58 Demuria with a tracker documenting current EDC work related to 2021 Master Plan Implementation Goals for
59 Debbie's biannual report to the Planning Board. LE is also in the process of updating the DBA spreadsheet
60 with larger business entities in Southborough that are solely registered with the state. She continues to share
61 the DBA spreadsheet with constituents upon request.

62 **EDC Recruitment, Visibility and Promotion** | Committee members discussed future meeting locations, events
63 and branding materials. LE feels that increasing the EDC's visibility at local events, by sporting EDC branded
64 collateral, etc. might be an easy way to pique interest and to connect through casual conversations in order to
65 raise awareness about the EDC and its activities.

66 **Meal Tax Increase** | LE brought up a meal tax increase and asked whether the EDC wanted to advocate for its
67 implementation with the Select Board. The Healey-Driscoll Administration's Municipal Empowerment Act
68 gives MA cities and towns the option to increase their meal tax from .75% to a flat 1%, a modest .25%
69 increase. Revenue from the local meal tax increase goes directly into the general fund. LE pointed out that
70 the meal tax isn't paid solely by residents but visitors as well, and that if EDC members dine out in
71 neighboring towns, they're likely paying a meal tax to that municipality rather than Southborough. MN
72 wanted more information before advocating for an increase to the Select Board. LE recommended that EDC
73 members meet with local officials such as the Town Assessor, the Town Administrator, etc. to get their
74 questions answered and to learn more.

75 **d) Coordinator Report**

76 **Business updates** | LE mailed a note of welcome to Walker Development signed by the EDC via USPS. LE said
77 that zoning issues continue to be a concern for realtors, brokers and developers, with commercial property
78 sales at an all-time low post-pandemic. Conversely, LE and KN noted that many smaller businesses can't afford
79 the high lease rate at corporately owned Southborough locations. KA shared that her local salon, Hashtag
80 Beauty at Town Center in Cordaville, may be displaced by a new tenant and wondered if LE could put together
81 a list of properties where the salon might relocate. MN supports helping businesses by providing information
82 on zoning and potential options for relocation and/or expansion. Likewise, KN wanted to confirm that an

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83 interested party is pursuing the proper licenses (entitlements) to open a restaurant at the former Tomasso
84 location on Route 9. LE explained that businesses are responsible for relinquishing a liquor license when they
85 vacate the premises in Southborough before the Town can issue a new license. She said she would keep them
86 posted on the status at that location and would assist the beauty salon owner in the meantime.

87 **One Stop FY26 Route 9 Zoning draft application** | LE reiterated that the Planning Board needs MBTA
88 Communities zoning to pass in order to more fully participate in a One Stop grant application process for
89 Route 9, as Planning staff will need to participate in putting the grant application together. The Select Board
90 has taken the lead in working with the Planning Board to that end.

91 **3. Discussions:**

92 **Review of EDC FY25 Budget - Other Contracted Services** | LE expected that a final draft of the Lombardo
93 Associates Wastewater Management Action Plan would be furnished shortly by grant project manager Claire
94 Reynolds (CR). Similar to her suggestion at July's EDC meeting, LE recommended a not-to-exceed contract for
95 the fiscal year to continue the work, which could be reasonably and easily covered under the EDC's FY25
96 budget. When MN and KN questioned the best course to take, LE offered that Town Administration could
97 provide guidance in executing a contract.

98 **4. Public Comment**

99 None.

100

101 **Next Meeting** | September and October EDC meetings TBD pending scheduling poll results among EDC
102 members.

103 **5. Adjourn**

104 **MOTION:** KA moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 pm, seconded by MN.

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

REFERENCED ITEMS | DOCUMENTS AT 8/8/24 MEETING:

1) EDC Tracker spreadsheet, 8/24

Category	Responsible Party	Action Items per <u>Otter.ai</u>	Follow-up	Partners	Completed
Business Assistance	LE	<i>Look into available commercial properties for relocating hair salon business</i>	Emailed list of properties with available s.f. and zoned for use	KA	8/12/24
Administrative	LE	<i>Set dates for September and October EDC meetings via Google Form survey</i>	Emailed Google Form survey Sun 8/11/24	KA, KN, MN	8/11/24
Review	LE	<i>Provide final Lombardo wastewater assessment report to committee</i>	Emailed final report on Mon 8/12/24	KA, KN, MN	8/12/24
Review	LE	<i>Send EDC tracker spreadsheet to committee members</i>	Emailed updated EDC tracker Mon 8/12/24	KA, KN, MN	8/12/24

Category	Responsible Party	Tasks - Goals - Objectives	Issues-Obstacles	Actions	Partners-Contacts	Projected Completion
Meeting Protocol	MN, KN, KA, LE	Review Robert's Rules of Order for basic understanding of meeting practices and protocols for timely, orderly meetings	Common issues		Vanessa Hale MMA	
Zoning	KN	Take Planetizen course " How Zoning Shapes Cities, Communities and Regions " by Jenny Schuetz	In order to have an informed discussion re: economic development, businesses and potential businesses in Southborough, a basic understanding of zoning, its history, application and current zoning-related issues, this course is required . EDC members should also familiarize themselves with Southborough zoning and its basic provisions, use restrictions and dimensional requirements within current local bylaws.	EDC approved \$3k for Planetizen as a training and educational resource for the EDC, the PB, and some members of the ZBA through 6/25. Karen Anglim completed the course as requested by the 7/18/24 EDC meeting. Please avail yourself of this resource.	Planetizen Rep Victor Castillo	8/7/24
EDC	MN, KN, KA	EDC recruitment	Time / opportunity / suitability. Reminder: all current EDC member's terms end on 6/30/25	LE is working on EDC branded items for the committee to be presented by or before the 9/24 EDC meeting	CCR, VA, MP, SB	5/25
EDC	LE	Create draft welcome postcard for businesses relocated to and recently opened in Southborough	-	Working on a draft card from EDC	EDC	8/7/24
EDC	LE	Report to MPIC Chair / EDC liaison-Debbie DeMuria-progress-to-date-on-EDC assigned MPIGs-for-bianual-MPIC-report-to-PB		MPIC tracker shared via email w/ Debbie DeMuria on 7/30/24	MPIC Debbie DeMuria	7/30/24
EDC	LE	Research available spaces for 1200-1500 s.f. salon (Hashtag Beauty)	Schedule / hours / available space	LE will research vacancies and zoning districts that can accommodate this use and will follow-up with the business owner.	Town Assessor Building Commissioner Planning Dept	9/24
EDC	LE	Website updates	Time constraints		IT	9/24
EDC	MN, KA, KN, LE	Review Lombardo Associates Wastewater Assessment Report for Route 9 and DT Southborough	-	EOEEA grant project manager Claire Reynolds furnished the final report available 8/9/24	CCR Select Board	9/24
Town	EDC SB	The Municipal Empowerment Act bill gives municipalities the option to increase their hotel, motel, and other rental tax from 6% to 7%, and their meal tax from the set .75% to 1% . Does the EDC want to advocate this to the SB to consider? Meal tax revenue: FY23 \$119,348 FY24 \$124,718 a 4.5% year-over-year increase	Time and Town priorities	Research specifics	Town Admin Select Board	3/25

Category	Lead	Tasks - Goals - Objectives	Actions	Issues - Obstacles	Partners-Contacts	Projected Completion
MPIG	SB, TA	1.7 Apply the findings from the Wastewater Management Feasibility Study and find solutions to wastewater issues, including development of localized wastewater treatment plants, using current technology where feasible. Seek grant funding to support wastewater management. Track technological developments to enable more effective, large scale wastewater treatment in the future.	Claire Reynolds retained Lombardo & Associates, Weston & Sampson and former town BOH Director Paul Pisinski to evaluate locations that can accommodate wastewater treatment and disposal through pre-feasibility reports and analysis via a 2022 EOEEA grant award. Subsequent reports were issued by Weston & Sampson in July '23 and by Lombardo Associates in July '24. Claire will be sharing these with the SB for review and consideration.	The Select Board needs to take the lead on pursuing properties and wastewater solutions downtown and townwide. The National Grid parcel behind the Southborough House of Pizza is contaminated. National Grid's asking price is well above what the town is willing to pay for a site where hazmat remediation is likely needed. The most promising site is 33 School Street, a Tony Kwan-owned property that was permitted as a solar and septic field, the latter of which has the capacity to service downtown and potentially wastewater from other town locations.	CCR	2028 2030
MPIG	PB	3.1 *Increase the use intensity for currently underutilized parcels.	Working with the SB and PB on a FY26 One Stop grant application for Route 9 zoning review and analysis.	Requires zoning amendments to the I, IP, BV and BH zoning districts.		2027 2028
MPIG	EDC	3.2 *Increase commercial tax revenue by reducing office vacancies and encouraging development of targeted, high potential sites, such as Dell EMC.	" " "	Zoning amendments that allow for mixed use (multiple uses) are needed to overcome the single use provisions within the current bylaw that govern all town parcels with the exception of the Downtown District.		2027 2028
MPIG	LE	3.3 Improve Southborough's commercial marketing by distinguishing it from the towns of Westborough, Framingham, Northborough, Marlborough, Ashland and Hopkinton.	An FY25 One Stop grant application was submitted for wayfinding around the Downtown District in preparation for Southborough's 300th birthday in 2027; this branding exercise will provide the basis for future branding and marketing efforts for the villages.	Limited hours and capacity (19.5 hrs / wk).	Tricentennial Committee	2027 2028
MPIG	EDC, PB, SB	3.5 *Continue to look for ways to leverage the Route 9 corridor for increased CIP • Capital Improvements Program tax revenue, e.g. changing zoning to allow taller buildings, or creating a DIF • District Improvement Financing district.	Working with the SB and PB on a FY26 One Stop grant application for Route 9 zoning review and analysis.	The first step before introducing a CIP or DIF are zoning amendments to the I, IP, BV and BH zoning districts.		2028
MPIG	EDC, PB, SB	3.7 *In collaboration with the PB, explore the opportunity to revise Route 9 zoning bylaws to allow for mixed use development and taller buildings with the aim of reducing vacancy and providing expanded amenities to offices and residents.	" " "	Limited resources and capacity due to the PB's current obligations and workload (including MBTA Communities).		2024 2027
MPIG	EDC, SB, TA	3.9 Evaluate options for resourcing grant research and application processes, especially for large scale projects that would be difficult or expensive for the Town to support on its own, including wastewater, connectivity and targeted development through DIF and other programs.	Claire Reynolds retained Lombardo & Associates, Weston & Sampson and former town BOH Director Paul Pisinski to evaluate locations that can accommodate wastewater treatment and disposal through pre-feasibility reports and analysis via a 2022 EOEEA grant award (see above).	Longer term undertaking and endeavor. Requires involvement from the SB, coordination and outreach to their contacts in surrounding municipalities. In addition to possible state grants, federal grant opportunities should be researched and evaluated to help meet these goals.	CCR	2025 2030
MPIG	EDC, PB, SB	PS 3.6 *Evaluate options for more intensive commercial development along Route 9, with activities such as selective rezoning, building wastewater treatment capacity, etc.	Claire Reynolds retained Lombardo & Associates, Weston & Sampson and former town BOH Director Paul Pisinski to evaluate locations that can accommodate wastewater treatment and disposal through pre-feasibility reports and analysis via a 2022 EOEEA grant award Working with the SB and PB on a FY26 One Stop grant application for Route 9 zoning review and analysis.	Requires zoning amendments to the I, IP, BV and BH zoning districts.	CCR	2025 2027
EDC	EDC, PB, SB	We should ensure businesses can locate to appropriate locations in Southborough - EDC Chair Michael Nordstrom	Working with the SB and PB on a FY26 One Stop grant application for Route 9 zoning review and analysis.	*Zoning amendments are needed in the I, IP, BH and BV zones to enable us to better meet this need, and to streamline the permitting process administered by the ZBA, PB and the BC per town bylaws.		*

Category	Lead	EDC 2021 Master Plan Implementation Goals	Issues - Obstacles	Partners-Contacts	Projected Completion
1.0	Downtown	<i>Enhance the Downtown to provide a vibrant hub that is attractive to both businesses and residents</i>			
	EDC, SB	<i>1.5 Identify potential Downtown District • DD redevelopment sites and take a leadership role in building relationships and working with current owners and potential developers on the purchase, leasing or conversion into mixed use projects consistent with DD, including the National Grid parcel</i>			
	SB, TA	<i>1.6 Evaluate the options and develop plans for creating a 'community green space' within the Downtown District.</i>			
	SB, TA	<i>1.7 Apply the findings from the Wastewater Management Feasibility Study and find solutions to wastewater issues, including development of localized wastewater treatment plants, using current technology where feasible. Seek grant funding to support wastewater management. Track technological developments to enable more effective, large scale wastewater treatment in the future</i>			
	SB, DPW	<i>1.8 Gain approval from CSX Transportation to allow the Town to replace the pipes under the tracks on Main Street in order to resolve the stormwater issues in the Downtown area</i>			
	EDC, DPW	<i>1.9 Where appropriate, encourage preservation by repurposing historical buildings and ensure DPW plans for Downtown align with historic and beautification priorities • HC</i>			
	EDC, SHOPC	<i>1.10 Work with SHOPC • Southborough Housing Opportunity Partnership Committee to determine whether mixed use development within the Downtown District can support affordable housing needs and goals</i>			
2.0	Villages	<i>Encourage the sense of community within Southborough's villages by supporting the expansion of local businesses through better infrastructure and access</i>			
	TA, SB	<i>2.1 Develop a comprehensive listing of Town owned properties that are already developed; evaluate and prioritize their use and potential based on agreed upon criteria</i>			
	DPW	<i>2.2 Define, plan and implement improvements to the sidewalk network for the Fayville, Cordaville and Southville Village Districts</i>			
	DPW	<i>2.3 Increase parking in the Fayville Village District, e.g. by reconfiguring playground parking</i>			
	DPW, SB, EDC	<i>2.4 Connect the commuter rail station to office and commercial areas in Town via improved sidewalks, shuttle bus service and bicycle lanes</i>			
	PB	<i>2.5 Develop an approach and plan to enhance retail convenience around the commuter rail station in accordance with expected 'MBTA Communities Housing Choice' development</i>			
3.0	Route 9	<i>Develop an economically strong, diverse and self-sustaining business community, i.e. an economic engine along the Route 9 corridor</i>			

Category	Lead	EDC 2021 Master Plan Implementation Goals	Issues - Obstacles	Partners-Contacts	Projected Completion
	PB, SB	3.1 Increase the use intensity for currently underutilized parcels			
	EDC	3.2 Increase commercial tax revenue by reducing office vacancies and encouraging development of targeted, high potential sites, such as Dell EMC			
	EDC	3.3 Improve Southborough's commercial marketing by distinguishing it from the towns of Westborough, Framingham, Northborough, Marlborough, Ashland and Hopkinton			
	SB	3.4 Stay connected with the state and actively participate in the Route 9, I-90 and I-495 highway projects			
	EDC, PB, SB	3.5 Continue to look for ways to leverage the Route 9 corridor for increased CIP • Capital Improvements Program tax revenue, e.g. changing zoning to allow taller buildings, or creating a DIF • District Improvement Financing district			
	DPW	3.6 Continue to develop and improve the sidewalk network along the Route 9 corridor			
	PB	3.7 In collaboration with the PB, explore the opportunity to revise Route 9 zoning bylaws to allow for mixed use development and taller buildings with the aim of reducing vacancy and providing expanded amenities to offices and residents		SB, PB	
	SB, EDC	3.8 Establish a quarterly 'roundtable' meeting between the EDC, PB, local and regional business leaders to discuss infrastructure and business issues, including last mile transit solutions, encouraging the use of public transportation, reducing congestion and environmental impacts			
	EDC, SB, TA	3.9 Evaluate options for resourcing grant research and application processes, especially for large scale projects that would be difficult or expensive for the Town to support on its own, including wastewater, connectivity and targeted development through DIF and other programs			
	PB, EDC, SB	PS 3.6 Evaluate options for more intensive commercial development along Route 9, with activities such as selective rezoning, building wastewater treatment capacity, etc		SB, PB	