

Economic Development Committee

Minutes

Thursday June 20, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.

East Room, Fairhaven Town Hall

Fairhaven, Ma 02719

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FAIRHAVEN,
MASS.

Present: Chairperson, Kevin McLaughlin, Bernie Roderick, and Robert Espindola.

Absent: Geoffrey Haworth, Eddie Lopez, Todd MacGregor, and John Seed

Town Planner, Paul Foley was also in attendance.

Mr. McLaughlin opened the meeting and advised they did not have a quorum to vote on the minutes and it would be tabled to the next meeting.

Guest Speaker on Wind Industry

Mr. McLaughlin introduced Paul Vigeant, who was presenting on the Emerging Offshore Wind Industry. The presentation will be available on the Economic Development Committee webpage.

Mr. McLaughlin stated the Committee was looking for an overview of what the offshore wind industry is all about and then how businesses in this area can benefit directly or indirectly from the wind industry.

Mr. Vigeant presented a comprehensive slide show with a lot of data and projections with the upshot being that there are a lot of jobs projected with offshore wind and Fairhaven is in a good position to capitalize on this. He reviewed the Massachusetts Wind Energy Area and other maps, statistics and data. Notably Operations and Maintenance crews usually live within 30 miles of the wind farms.

Mr. Espindola stated he was at a conference that talked about energy and wind recently.

Mr. Roderick stated the presentation was very informative. Mr. McLaughlin agreed saying the real money is in the components of construction.

Massachusetts Economic Council Membership

Mr. Foley stated they have re-enrolled and there was an invoice to be paid for this, it covers up to five people.

Social Media Platform

Mr. Foley said he has recently been given a password and will update information on the website going forward. Please let him know if you have any news or suggestions.

Ocean Clusters

Mr. McLaughlin stated that Mr. Rees wants to speak on this in the future.

Mr. Foley handed out some information on ocean clusters. Ocean Clusters represent a closed loop sustainable practice that seeks to use all potential uses of a raw resource, the whole fish (per example) – fish oil, fertilizer, etc. Mr. Foley stated that New Bedford was updating their Harbormaster Plan and created an Ocean Cluster recently. He gave a brief presentation on what this is and that if Fairhaven is interested he will contact New Bedford. Basically the goal is 'zero waste'; using the whole fish not just using the fish fillet.

Mr. McLaughlin asked if the ocean clusters were specifically about fish or more broaden than that. Mr. Foley said it was more than fish, though it seems to be the main focus now, they also seek to build on ocean energy systems.

Mr. McLaughlin, Mr. Roderick and Mr. Foley discussed the economics that are available now for graduating students in the trades vs. college. Mr. McLaughlin said that his business was active with getting the Vocational schools to prepare for the good jobs available in the waterfront industries. Mr. Foley noted that at a recent conference they said they were going to need more welders.

Parking By-Law

Mr. Foley said he read our parking by-law and said it was pretty good compared to other Towns; he said Dartmouth and Westport are comparable to ours for density.

Mr. Roderick asked about the empty "Benny's". He said it was still vacant and heard a rumor that O'Reilly's wasn't interested. Mr. Foley said he was following up.

Mr. Roderick asked about the Mazda dealership vacating, but Mr. Foley said that they wanted to move it to in front of Alden Buick. He said the area has become a wetland and currently in the works to reapply for permits and through Conservation.

Opportunity Zones

Mr. Foley discussed the Opportunity Zone which includes most of Rt. 6 up to 240. There is a potential to get up to a \$30,000 grant from the Economic Development Administration to do a redevelopment study for the area. It would need a 50% match which may be available through the Community Compact. Mr. Foley was looking for both in the Economic Development and the Planning Board to get on board and apply for both of those grants. He said there is money available and they should take advantage of this opportunity to analyze the area and look into alternative zoning to develop density in certain areas. He said he brought it to the attention of the Planning Board and they seemed to be on board with it.

Mr. Foley discussed a grant that might be able be available through EDA to do a redevelopment study in the Opportunity Zone with up to \$30,000 of EDA Funds but we need to find a match. Mr. Foley described where the Opportunity Zone is as well as how the opportunity funds work. He explained that the EDC is eligible for a community compact grant which they received in the past however, for this year the DLS have allocated all the funds, but he will send them a letter and see what can be done.

The next round starts in mid-August.

The needs of the retail world are changing quickly, but this may present an opportunity to redevelop the 1970's malls with huge stores and vast parking lots into a more compact mix of uses. The study would be to review the area, work with citizens and stakeholders and develop a strategy for reinvestment and redevelopment for the area. It will be important to work with the property and business owners of commercial shopping malls and make them a part of the study process. This may include exploring mixed-use zoning that could potentially transform the area into a denser, more efficient mix of commercial, office, institutional and residential uses that increases the footprint of what can be done in Town by going up. This may include Transfer of Development Rights and density bonuses.

There followed a discussion regarding the opportunity fund and Opportunity Zone and how it works and where money can be invested. Mr. Foley he received a call from someone asking if the Hampton Inn could take advantage of the program. Unfortunately, it appears that they are just outside of the zone. He gave them a number to call to see if they could be included.

Mr. Roderick stated he would love to see the Conservation agent come before this board to discuss the previous drive-in area and clarify how wet the land is. Mr. McLaughlin explained the mitigation process if you have land over erosion of a wetland. Discussion on other properties in Fairhaven that may have a lot of wetlands or parking lots that may be able to create other things.

Incubator/Goals of Economic Development

Mr. McLaughlin stated that they engaged FXM in the very beginning to put an Economic Development Plan together and they have yet to review that plan and try to implement the goals as designed. He said there were five goals they put together and they should keep them on the forefront to be a focus for the Committee.

Mr. Roderick stated the Committee has met entering its third year, and need to focus on bringing economic development to the Town. Mr. McLaughlin stated that a lot of the topics we have on agenda's all get back to the Committee's goals, and he just wants to make sure the goals stay at the forefront.

Mr. Roderick asked if it was the preview of the Committee to contact business developers. Mr. McLaughlin stated he didn't think the Committee was in the marketing business, but to make an overall appearance for Fairhaven, the overall goal was to supply information to the Select Board to make economic development decisions.

Respectively submitted,

Patricia A. Pacella
Recording Secretary

Documents reviewed:

1. The Emerging Offshore Wind Industry – Paul Vigeant Slide Show