

**Fairhaven  
Economic Development Committee  
Thursday, July 23, 2020 – Via Zoom Remote  
Minutes**

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TOWN CLERK

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**1. Present:** Kevin McLaughlin, Bernie Roderick, Robert Espindola, Cathy Melanson,

FAIRHAVEN,  
MASS.

**Absent:** Todd MacGregor, Eddie Lopez and Geoff Haworth.

Director of Planning and Economic Development, Paul Foley was also in attendance.

Mr. McLaughlin called the EDC Meeting to order at 6:35p.m.

Town Clerk, Carolyn Hurley was in attendance to swear in the new members of the Economic Development Committee. Kevin McLaughlin and Bernie Roderick were sworn in as new members.

**2. Review and Approve minutes of January 20, 2020 meeting.** At this time, minutes could not be approved until a meeting quorum of the minutes from that meeting were present.

**3. Elections.**

Bernie Roderick nominated Kevin McLaughlin as Chairperson and was seconded by Mr. Espindola. Motion passed unanimously, via roll call vote.

Cathy Melanson made a motion to nominate herself as Vice Chairperson and was seconded by Mr. Espindola. Motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

**4. Broadband Study Committee: Appoint member of EDC**

Mr. Espindola stated that he was already on this committee representing the Select Board. He stated John Seed had been the member in the past.

Mr. Espindola nominated Cathy Melanson as the appointed member of the Broadband Study Committee and was seconded by Bernie Roderick. The motion passed unanimously via roll call.

**5. Electric Aggregation Program – Renewable Energy Survey**

Mr. Espindola went over the renewable energy survey that was brought forth to the Select Board. He said it was a group of 22 communities in the Southcoast area to purchase electricity as a group to save money. He said the process allows individual or businesses to purchase renewable energy on a voluntary basis. The Group asked if all business and residents could pay an extra 10% of their energy to be renewable, but if they wanted to, people could opt out. The group did a survey for about 30 days, it closed recently and the results showed 60% in favor of doing this. "Climate Reality" worked with Sustainability Committee to issue the survey. Mr. Espindola shared the survey results given to him by Ms. McClees. Mr. Espindola asked if the EDC wanted to weigh in on this renewable energy.

Mr. McLaughlin thought it was a bit shortsighted. He stated his power was going through solar and that was an initial investment. He was not sure if this was an opportunity for new businesses or individuals to pay more into power renewable energy.

Mr. Espindola did not think that right now during Covid that it makes sense to move forward with this.

Mr. Roderick stated he supported Mr. Espindola's position on this. He did not think there was anywhere near enough community support through the survey.

#### **6. SRPEDD, CARES Act Funding**

Mr. Foley stated there was an email forwarded from SRPEDD today. They have scheduled a special meeting on August 19 at SRPEDD (RESC) Economic Development to discuss the CARES Act Grant. Mr. Foley stated the new CARES Act Funding would fund feasibility studies.

#### **7. Goals of Economic Development**

Mr. McLaughlin stated this was just to keep it on the agenda to remind us of the goals that we discussed with FXM back in 2017. Mr. Espindola stated our goals are tied in with the Master Plan. It is certainly something we should keep in the forefront. Mr. Roderick asked if these goals needed to be renewed for the year. Mr. Foley reviewed the five goals from the EDC.

#### **8. Continued review of possible Building Permit fee increases.**

Mr. McLaughlin discussed the building permit fee increases. He said the Building Department fees are not a significant amount of money for the Town. As a business owner, he writes 30-40 checks a year to the Town of Fairhaven. He said he did not know what the total incoming fee is on a yearly basis, and understands the Town needs revenue, but he is not sure what percentage is really coming from the Building Department fees, but perhaps that could be reviewed.

Ms. Melanson agreed that perhaps looking at building fees as a whole should be done (not just the Building Department but also DPW fees).

Mr. McLaughlin related his personal experience with very high building permit fees he paid recently to build his building. He paid all the fees up front and then the taxes increased. He felt the disconnect was what he was getting in return for paying the fees. He believes that a selling point to build or be a business owner in Fairhaven could be that the permit fees are "lower" than surrounding Towns.

Ms. Melanson agreed that higher permit fees for a new business may stop a new business from coming in to town. She said it could be very 'overwhelming' with all the permits up front, building, DPW, water, etc.

Mr. Espindola remembered from Mr. White said there is a new method that would be more equitable. He certainly believes if there are increases, it should be done over time. He said he does not want to lose sight of the rationale of why the change was proposed. Mr. Espindola did state that new Select Board member, Keith Sylvia, had an interest in taking this on with specific questions and it might behoove him to get the EDC's concerns as a whole, so he can pursue permit fees across the board of Fairhaven, not just the Building Department.

Mr. McLaughlin agreed if the objective is to focus in only on the Building Department that would not be worth it. He thinks that they need to look at all fees associated to new businesses and buildings, including DPW, water, etc.

Ms. Melanson suggested that Mr. White be invited back to the Committee to discuss again in the future. Mr. Espindola stated that he could certainly have a conversation with Mr. White and Mr. Furtado of the

DPW about the concerns of the Committee and then they could come forth to offer suggestions. Mr. McLaughlin said it would be best to be aware that it is a discussion only and not to put anyone on the defense.

#### **9. Rt.6/240/Opportunity Zone Redevelopment Grant/Study**

Mr. Foley reviewed a few grants the town was awarded. The Town received a Community Compact Best Practices Grant for \$38,500 to do a Policy and Prioritization Plan through the Complete Streets Program. Complete Streets are to make sure the streets in Town are designed for all users of all abilities. The Grant will pay for a Tier 1 Policy and a Tier 2 Prioritization Plan. Once both the Policy and Plan are approved by MassDOT, the Town becomes eligible to apply for up to \$400,000 annually to build those projects on the approved Prioritization Plan.

Mr. Foley said the Town also received a Community Compact Best Practices Grant of \$30,000 to do an Economic Redevelopment Study for the plazas around Route 6 and 240. Mr. Roderick asked about the Rt. 6 Study that SRPEDD did to drop it to two lanes vs. four lanes. Mr. Foley said that is different. That is referring to a SRPEDD traffic study that has nothing to do with this Economic Redevelopment Study. He does not see any movement in Fairhaven going to two lanes.

Mr. Espindola stated that SRPEDD is looking for each community to reach out to SPREDD if they want more on that study particularly.

Mr. Foley discussed the Redevelopment Target Area, which includes the Wal-Mart Plaza, the Staples Plaza and the Town's landfill among other landmarks. Mr. Foley will be reviewing the history of Fairhaven and Study Area to add more capacity to the business and industrial zones including mixed-use in the Business area. EDC pledged \$5,000 toward this study and he contracted FXM to update the economic data for industry and target area. Mr. Foley reviewed the goals in the Master Plan that would be complimented with this study.

Mr. McLaughlin asked about the Community Compact Grant. Mr. Foley reviewed. Mr. McLaughlin asked for a brief summary to be added for the next meeting so it is clarified where the pledged \$5,000 money will be supported best toward the grant.

#### **10. FXM –Update.**

FXM Associates has been contracted to update the statistics from the 2017 Economic Development Plan for the Town as a whole and within the Target Area for the Redevelopment Study.

#### **11. Huttleston Marketplace and Farmer's Market**

Mr. Foley stated he went to the Huttleston Marketplace and it has excellent stalls. He bought some plants, vegetables and jewelry and recommends people check it out. There is also a Farmer's Market on Sunday on Alden Road that is very good. He just wanted to let people know that it is out there and available.

#### **12. Any other business reasonable anticipated within 48 hours.**

Mr. McLaughlin was asked to be on a group called, "OCEAN", Formed by UMASS Dartmouth that is trying to leverage the BlueTech in the area. There are members from Swansea, Fall River, New Bedford and further east. Not much to report at this time, they are just getting started and formulating some subcommittees. Mr. McLaughlin stated he hoped to be the liaison between that group and the EDC.

Mr. Espindola related that the Broadband Study Committee has developed a website and video "The digital economy" (3:00minute long video). Will forward to committee members.

13. Next Meeting August 20, 2020

Cathy Melanson made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Bob Espindola. Motion passed unanimously at 8:22p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Patricia A. Pacella  
Recording Secretary