

Minutes of 1.10.19 Maynard Economic Development Committee (MEDC) Meeting

Gianotis Room, #201, Maynard Town Building, 8 am.

Meeting called to order at 8:05 am.

Members present: Jack MacKeen, Bill Nemser, Lynda Thayer, Sarah Cressy, Dick Downey, and Ron Calabria.

Members absent: Karen Freker and Will Doyle

Guests: Greg Johnson (TA) and Armand Diarbekirian (BOS Liaison).

Minutes of 12.13.18 moved, seconded, and unanimously approved.

Parking Management Plan. MacKeen noted a slight revision to the plan adding the potential parking impact of marijuana dispensaries in Maynard's Central Business District (CBD).

Copies of the plan draft were reviewed by the Police Department, Town Administrator and DPW. All support the creation of a parking authority. DPW and TA both note that limited resources will impact the timing of executing the Parking Plan. Healthy discussion ensued including:

- With the expected near-term retirement of the current parking enforcement officer, discussion centered on how the CBD parking would be enforced. Cressy suggested that enforcement is utilized during higher demand hours. Enforcement is moot when supply is high. Calabria questioned whether or not this is fair. Cressy also suggested exploring civilians, such as a "meter maid" for enforcement to put less strain on the Town's budget.
- Nemser commented that most building owners understand that they need to compromise when relying on shared public parking, and reminded others that we should look at the "big picture," rather than over react to one or two complaints.
- Nemser also asked who will be responsible for managing/maintaining signage. Calabria suggests that eventually, a parking authority should possess this responsibility.
- MacKeen suggested that this authority could create cross-departmental opportunity. Suggested participants may include the ATA, DPW and/or Town Engineer, and maybe an MEDC rep.
- Under Item 12, Downey asked that handicapped parking behind Subway be redistributed. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to reflect this in the Parking Mgmt. Plan. The plan will be edited to reflect this action.
- Downey also suggested that space(s) be allocated for Lyft/Uber.
- Downey volunteered to inventory present parking signage within the plan's jurisdiction.
- MEDC asked Johnson for his feedback. He responded that while we still don't know who will manage this process, and what individuals should be involved, he does like the fact that there is a plan, which will provide him with direction.

Revised Economic Development Elements of the Master Plan. The Master Plan Committee asked for feedback on a written presentation distributed to the MEDC. Once again, spirited discussion ensued.

- MacKeen noted a need to create an economic development plan, and the economic development goals and comments thereon included in the Master Plan will shape that plan. In response, Nemser commented that at the MEDC's inception, he distributed an economic action plan. Cressy asked Nemser to redistribute.
- MacKeen reinforced that Master Plan Economic Development section should address the entire town. The current proposal feels focused on the CBD and the Mill.

- Calabria asked what problems we are trying to solve. He also reminded the group that we need to make sure that infrastructure can support the proposed development, especially along the Powdermill corridor.
- Cressy stated that every economic development plan should include job creation and revenue creation for the municipality. She also reminded the group that individuals that go into private business, want to make their own rules, and that different types of businesses need different hours and different promotions. Since one size does not fit all, harmonizing store hours and promotions is an overreach. Cressy also found the suggestion that the Town should support/represent tenants in landlord-tenant negotiations baffling. While the MEDC should direct businesses towards assistive resources, representing tenants in negotiations is outside of the Town's scope of work. Moreover, Cressy suggested that what people want, and what will work, or often two very different things. Therefore, spending resources on a survey may not be useful. Cressy suggested going back to the Berringer Report, which proposed realistic suggestions. Last but not least, Cressy proposed that there the current plan places too much emphasis on retail, to create a stable economic environment. Retail is risky, margins are slim, and wages are low. In order to be healthy, retail needs a mix of healthy neighbors (like banks, professionals, insurance agencies, manufacturer's, etc.).
- Downey reminded the group that this plan should influence the next 50 years of development. Downey proposes that we plan to open the Assabet River for recreational use, and have a long-term plan to create walking trails along the river banks. This will make the riverfront a destination, will put less focus on the Mill, and in turn, change the Town's culture. Over the next 50 years, our goal should be to obtain increased easements to insure access to the river. The question is, how do we implement? Downey also agrees that job and revenue production needs to be part of the plan, that there's too much emphasis on the downtown, and that we need a plan for the Powdermill Corridor.
- Thayer feels that we should continue to capitalize on our "most walkable" downtown, and agrees with Downey that creating the riverside as a destination should be a priority. She also questions whether or not the Town needs to employ a Real Estate consultant to help market older buildings such as the former Stratus.
- Downey asked if we needed another SWOT to assist us with prioritization.

Action: Bill Nemser will collect and organize comments and prepare a letter response to the Master Plan Committee.

Election of Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk. MacKeen suggested that we maintain the current officers, pending filling open membership slots. The group agreed.

Annual Report. MacKeen asked Cressy to prepare the Annual Report so that it may be approved at our January 24 meeting. Cressy agreed.

Other:

--Committee Development. At present, there are two open positions on the MEDC. MacKeen welcomes suggestions.

Meeting adjourned at 9:42 am.