
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 11, 2024

I. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Following members of the Northbridge Economic Development Committee (EDC) were in attendance and introduced themselves: Michael Wilkes, Muriel Emond, Ken Chilton, & Joyce Augustus. Thomas Melia & Chloe Mawn were absent with R Gary Bechtholdt II, Planning Director also in attendance.

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE -MEMBER TERMS (3-YEARS)

Recent Appointments/Resignations

G Bechtholdt informed Committee of resignation of Willaim Davis, noting vacancy on the Committee. J Augustus acknowledged term to expire (May/June 2024) and willingness to be reappointed by Board of Selectmen.

III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE -REORGANIZATION

Chair, Vice Chair & Clerk

Upon motion(s) duly made/seconded, the Committee appointed Ken Chilton Chair; Michael Wilkes Vice Chair & Joyce Augustus Clerk.

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE -MISSION STATEMENT

Establishment of Short & Long-Term Goals

K Chilton shared some insight on economic development, suggesting Committee members visit existing municipal Economic Development Committees' websites to review their Mission Statements & other information offered. Committee noted some municipal EDCs are more sophisticated than others, understanding Northbridge's Committee is somewhat new and still defining its role & purpose.

Committee noted the following resource documents for Northbridge: Economic Strategic Plan (June 2017), Village of Rockdale -Technical Assistance Panel Report (January 2019), and the Town of Northbridge Master Plan (April 1994). G Bechtholdt indicated the Planning Board is to undertake the initiative to prepare a comprehensive Master Plan (TBD), where one of the main elements is Economic Development.

In addition to local studies and reports, G Bechtholdt noted the Commonwealth (Governor Healey) issued the state's Economic Development Plan (in 2023) and where the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) has prepared, in partnership with municipalities (southern Worcester County) a CEDS - Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (in 2018). M Wilkes noted he attends regular meetings with CMRPC (rep for Planning Board) mentioned CMRPC intends to update the CEDS on a more regular basis.

Committee members agreed to review Mission Statements from others and will each prepare a draft statement for Northbridge's EDC to be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting. Members were reminded to be mindful of unique features Northbridge may have including National Park designation (tourism); working agricultural farms (Foppema's Farm); and the multiple industrial/business/commercial areas (Whitinsville, Linwood, Rockdale, Osterman Commerce Park, & the Shops).

V. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE -MEETING CALENDAR

Vote to Set Schedule (Quarterly or other)

After some general discussion of individual schedules, Committee decided to meet monthly via ZOOM and will look to meet in-person on a quarterly basis or as may be necessary when meeting with business community, residents, and others. Next meeting of the EDC is scheduled for Monday, April 01, 2024 at 6:30 PM (via ZOOM). G Bechtholdt is to prepare EDC agenda with reference to ZOOM link.

VI. Public Input/Comment

None noted at this time.

VII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The EDC will review and consider its Mission Statement and begin to identify short and long-term goals at its next meeting scheduled for Monday, April 01, 2024. Additionally, Committee will look to identify potential business challenges & opportunities for Northbridge. G Bechtholdt briefly reviewed past initiatives and partnerships including Board of Selectmen hosting local business spotlight during its regularly scheduled meeting(s) where a local business owner would present the who, what & where; aimed to help promote businesses in the community. G Bechtholdt also noted partnership with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, including an annual Open for Business Breakfast town-hosted event (2016-2019), where business community was invited to meet with local and state agencies. Past participants include Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, Sen. Fattman, Rep. Muradian, as well as representatives from MA Office of Business Development (MOBD), Central Mass Grown, MassDevelopment, Mass Growth Capital, and National Park Service (NPS).

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion duly made/seconded the EDC meeting of March 11, 2024 was adjourned at or about 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Planning Director

Date approved: _____

Cc: Town Clerk