

## **Economic Development Commission Meeting Minutes - April 27th, 2020 @ 6:30 PM**

**Attendees:** Sue DiPesa (chair), R J Dwyer (vice-chair), Jack McInnis, Paul Bartkiewicz, Matthew Nelson and Susanne Hofmeister, Geena Savage

### **Members of the Public:**

Mark D'Onofrio (Chamber of Commerce)  
Karen Canfield (Board of Selectman)  
Sara Di Pesa (Harbor Merchants)

**Walk ins:** Frank McMillen (Scituate Launch), Michelle Wood (Mill Wharf),

### **North Scituate Sewer Update:**

Karen Canfield gives an update about the regional sewer plan for North Scituate. As of today, the Cohasset Board of Selectmen is in favor of connecting sewer only for North Scituate Village to their town sewer (plan 5.1). The Cohasset sewer commission needs to vote on this. If this already happened will be found out at the board of selectman meeting tonight. Estimated costs for the town of Scituate will be \$9.5 million to \$10 million. Before the Corona virus crisis the funds were covered by the mass work grants and transportation funds.

### **Liaisons Reports:**

#### ***North Scituate Village:***

Two estimates for the banners for NSV were presented to the EDC. One estimate was about \$1568 for the 32 banners, from Image Resolutions from Norwell. The other estimate was about \$2240 for the banners from Hassan Signs in Cohasset. An invoice for the design of the banners was also presented and this invoice was \$810 from Kim O'Reilly. The EDC did not vote on any of these invoices, because the Town Administrator advised all committees to not spend any of their money. The TA has to approve all spending.

The project manager Henry Yeh of the North Scituate Train Canopy Project is frustrated with the lack of progress of his project. He tried numerous times to contact Sean McCarthy from the Scituate Highway Department. Sean was responsible for getting bids for the cementing. It would be helpful if the EDC could step in and asks for an update and a timeline for this project on the town level. The funds were approved in October by CPC and therefore the project should be ready to go.

#### ***Scituate Harbor:***

West Cork meeting is determined to use up their grand money until June 30th and finished the Irish Heritage Trail. The student exchange program is obviously on hold, because all schools are closed.

### **Discussion: EDC Budget:**

\$13,000 are left in this year's budget. The TA Jim Budrow gives us no authorization to spend this money. We are not sure, what next year's budget will look like.

Karen Canfield is waiting for state input. There will be no town meeting this month and the town is in an austerity mode. The town's budget depends on state aid. The state expects a 14-20% decrease in revenue on state level in comparison to last year.

### **Discussion: Priority Brainstorming for Scituate Business Reconstruction:**

Sue DiPesa suggested to establish a committee to help businesses in the harbor to survive. This committee should exist of two members of the EDC, and should include members from the chamber of commerce, harbor merchants, Scituate Community Christmas, Beautification Committee.

The Committee should meet weekly and work on a plan, that should be presented to the TA and the Board of Health.

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Jack stated that he is eager to work on this plan. With only the allowed 50% capacity, restaurants will struggle to generate enough revenue. Maybe, we should have 1st night as a weekly event, to help business in the harbor.

Sue: The Front Porch Project is an excellent example how people could help the business in the harbor. The benefits could be used to buy banners or twinkling lights and for upgrades in the harbor.

RJ has already a good working relationship with the harbor merchants. Not only the restaurants have problems, the retailers are suffering, too. All merchants are dealing with the shut down, standing bills, taxes, landlords and electricity bills. And they have no timeframe when they can re-open. The EDC could help them with online business, a virtual village market could be better connected to the town's webpage, so people could find it easy.

Creating Facebook pages for harbor merchants and posting what they want and need would be helpful. Chamber of Commerce could help with that effort. These pages could be linked to Scituate Monthly and Scituate Connect pages.

Paul suggested to involve the Board of health and the Fire and Police department early in the process of drafting a plan to revitalize the harbor, so that we know what we can do and what not. The planning board should be involved, too. Maybe we can ask Ann Burbine to get involved.

Jack is friends with the Fire and Police chief. As soon as the committee has a preliminary plan, we could use these personal relationships to get everyone on board.

Geena thinks the EDC could help businesses to adapt even faster. She notices birthday parades, people playing music on their front porches or selling art.

Mat says the businesses are connecting with customers on different platforms already, having curbside pick-ups. Maybe upping 1st night to a weekly event could help businesses.

Susi is in favor of creating more outside capacity. Try to get boaters as customers in creating an outside bar in the harbor or a beer garden.

Michelle from Mill Wharf says the payroll protection plan really would help to pay for rent and for the payroll. If the restaurants will be allowed to re-open with only 40% capacity, it will be really hard to pay bills coming January.

Cross merchandising, like order dinner from Mill Wharf and desert from Nona's could be one way to get business going. And use curbside pick-up. Curbside pick-up from the water by boaters would be another great idea to spruce up business.

Frank from Scituate Launch thinks that getting all together and working together would be a great first step to get out of this.

Mark from the Chamber of Commerce reminds everybody not to forget that businesses in North Scituate and Greenbush are also suffering. He states that banks are still working hard on Payroll assistance and that they still accept applications. There is also a program, you can apply directly at the SBA for. These credits could be a lifeline for merchants to get them through the next 6-9 months. Although, he is aware, that many people are timid to get into debts, with no clear picture of the future. An online shopping day or buy a gift card day to donate those gift cards to healthcare workers could help local businesses, too. Or create an online palooza to buy products from people in town. He would love to do more, but the

limited size of the board of the chamber and his own workload limits the hands to work with. The Chamber of Commerce is in the process of hiring an assistant, who will oversee their website, and public relations. They are talking to a person who has experiences with marketing and social media.

The biggest contribution the chamber could bring to the table, would be to help with SBA and banking issues for small business owner's. If the EDC could organize a zoom meeting with business owners, Mark would be happy to be there and give advise about small loans, SBA and other programs available for small business owners.

EDC votes on building a Committee to revitalize local businesses: All in favor.  
Meeting minutes from December and January were approved by an anonymous roll call.

Next EDC meeting: May 18th 2020  
Meeting adjourned.

APPROVED: May 18, 2020