

**Economic Development Commission Meeting Minutes - June 12th, 2023 @ 6:30 pm**

Committee Chair: Susan DiPesa

The mission of the Economic Development Commission is to enhance the existing business community, attract new business, attract new customers, and encourage redevelopment and new development as may be advisable in order to increase the Town's property tax revenues, income, job base, and overall economic health.

**Date:** June 12th, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

**Location:** Zoom

**Attendees:** Sue DiPesa (chair), Susanne Hofmeister (co-chair), Geena Savage, Paul Bartkiewicz and Fran McMillen

**Members of the public:** Karen Canfield (Selectboard), Seth Pfeiffer (Scit TV), Shelley Swanson (BirchBarn), Alicia Rule, Grace Gardner, Berry Kurland

**Call to Order:** Sue DiPesa called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

**Meeting Minutes:** Paul makes a motion to approve the April and May minutes and Susi seconds it. Geena abstains for the April minutes, because she was not in attendance, but she approves the May minutes. All others are in favor. April and May minutes are approved.

**Agenda:**

Old/New Business:

- Call to Order
- Approve Minutes: April 2023, May 2023
- Review, approve and sign pending bills – Review approved bills under the Municipal Modernization Act

Chairperson Report: Sue Di Pesa

Select Board: Karen Canfield

Discussion:

- Funding application review and discussion
- EDC priorities discussion for FY 2024

Other Business:

Adjourn

Next Meeting: July 17th, 2023.

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**Selectboard Report - Karen Canfield:** Tonight is a "Support Ukraine" golf tournament that is being sponsored at Widow's Walk Golf course. Tomorrow night the Selectboard is meeting and on the agenda are the interviews with candidates for the open positions on the EDC. If you want to comment or weigh in on this, please feel free to do so. After the recent town election, Sue Harrison has now joined the Selectboard. She was most recently on the Zoning Board of Appeals and for a long time the chair of the Shellfish Advisory. Sue Harrison is very familiar with town politics and the Selectboard is happy to have her. As part of the new board, they reorganized the board and Maura Curran has been named to be this year's chair, Andrew Goodrich is vice chair and Sue Harrison is the clerk. On July 13th the Selectboard will have their annually retreat to sit down and have a conversation about what their priorities are for the next fiscal year. Karen's priorities are sewer expansion, reuse of the old Gates building, and connectivity around the common (being able to walk around our facilities, including the common).

The Selectboard will have a discussion about sewer. There are no news from the regional sewer project, but the town has been working on a local solution for the past 18 months. After the July 13th meeting, Karen will have an update on this progress and the next steps ahead.

**Chairperson Report - Sue DiPesa:**

As a result of this meeting, Sue will send priorities from EDC to the Selectboard to be considered at their retreat. EDC's first and foremost need is a Town Planner, Director of Planning and Development. It is really difficult to fight out all this difficulties without the support of a town planner. Berry and Grace are two candidates for the open positions on the EDC and they are both attending tonight's meeting. Sue met with both of them a week ago, and strongly supports their candidacy. Another EDC priority is the overall communication from the town to the community. There should be an updated website, there should be all kind of fun stuff on there, too. Maybe, that would be up to the town planning and development person, but this is an important piece. EDC could maybe provide some assistance to the town, to better communication. There are more priorities: WiFi for the boats in the harbor for example.

**Discussion:** *Funding application review and discussion*

To resolve the issue with the Town Finance Director denying approved EDC funding for applicants the town will draw up a contract, which should clarify what is fundable by the town and what is not. The latest denial was the invoices for social media work and website work for the Scituate Visitors Center. It was paid by the town before, but now the Financial Director changed her mind and denies to pay those bills. We can't see a legal reason for not paying these bills, but still can't get the town to agree on this. It is important to avoid such conflicts in the future, because EDC votes on an application and supports it, only to learn after submitting it too the town, that it is denied. This does not look good und makes the whole process redundant. The new application process from EDC was accepted by town council and by the Finance Director. We need the contract in addition to clearly outline, what the town will fund and what not. We will need categories, like CPC has. The contract will be a part of the application package. We are still waiting on a list, what EDC has funded in the past. The request is still unanswered by the town. Sue will ask the Director of Finance again, after this meeting and Karen Canfield will support her in her request.



### **Discussion: EDC Priorities for FY 2024**

Sue asks the EDC members what EDC should focus on in FY 2024:

- Push for WiFi for the harbor (not the businesses)?
- How to attract new business in town? Pop-up, food trucks, festivals?
- Help out Beautification?
- Could we help with signage? Could we push for a new billboard on 3A? We should have something out there: Welcome to Scituate!
- Work on infrastructure/ push town to do more: public restrooms in the harbor, signage for bathrooms in the harbor master building
- Improve landscaping, signage, welcome businesses, maybe inventory vacant shops, communicate with buildings owner, use our budget to improve something
- Harbor does not look good right now, no flowers, all weeds, does not look welcoming, does not look well kept, major attraction in town => put up banners, flowers, clean streets, add mural
- A mural would be a great attraction in the town and Patrice Maye is in charge of it. Cultural Harbor District Committee has the funds for it and they are planning a beautiful big mural on the back buildings in Cole Parkway, which will be sea themed.
- Install kiosks around town, inform people about public transportation, invite cycling
- Nancy Werner established a Scituate Bicycle Committee including 6 advocates for bicycling in town (Berry Kurland, Grace Gardner and her husband, and Nancy are members). They are looking for racks, paths and signage and support for bicycles in town. There also needs to be a cultural shift happen, to get people on their bikes. Pier 44 will have bike racks, too. There should be a lot of conversation about bicycles in town to make it happen and improve traffic in Scituate.
- These improvements would not only bring more revenue, but also energy, community spirit and pride of the place.
- Pop up businesses in vacant stores would be a great way for BirchBarn Design and other businesses, which are not located on Front Street, to temporarily have a place in a heavily trafficked paths and see what results would that bring to the business. A town planner would be a great person, to take the helm on this and help businesses.
- The Bandstand is managed by Kevin Kelly, he is in charge of repairs. The concert series is payed and managed by Harbor Cultural District Committee. Repairs were made, but no additional funds are going into the old bandstand, because there is a new bandstand planned within the Cole Parkway project. Maybe there could be lights added or a little bit work on the ceiling or a paint job, because the bandstand gets a lot of attraction and it does not look good.

- Hopefully, we will have a draft contract from the town by our next EDC meeting in July. And then we could get our grant application package ready. We should get a list from the town attorney of legally authorized things, that the town can fund. We need clarification from the Selectboard and town counsel to see what we are charged with. What is consistent with our mission, is it legally authorized by the town? - Then it should be funded.
- The EDC's top priorities is to have a clear path forward to know exactly, what we can fund and what not, to clarify the grant application process and to avoid a denial by the town, after EDC approved a grant application.
- We should plan to revisit our list of liaisons for certain groups. There are a number of new businesses in the harbor we might could approach, for example the Wine Bar to get a new vintage point. Liaisons are really important to EDC, because they give us a report from their area and inform us, what is important for them.
- Maybe there could be a group of Friends of ... to bring all the businesses together.

We are looking forward to our new additions on the board from the next meeting on.

**Other Business:**

Next EDC meeting: July 17th, 2023

**Adjournment 7:35 pm**

Respectfully submitted: Susanne Hofmeister 06/15/2023

*Approved 12/11/23*