



**TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH
PLANNING BOARD**

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Cindy Markowitz, Chair Mark White, Clerk Mark Barbadoro Robin Lazarow Rebecca Verner

Approved on Aug. 3, 2020

**Meeting Minutes
July 16, 2020
7:50 PM
Remote Meeting**

VIA ZOOM – JOINT MEETING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (EDC)

Planning Board Members Present: Cindy Markowitz, Mark Barbadoro, Rebecca Verner, Robin Lazarow, Mark White

Also Present: Simon Corson (Town Planner)

Also Present from EDC: Rich Guzzardi, Joseph Ferguson, Kristin Hilberg, Nate McKinley, Mark White, Becky Neville, John Markiewicz (Select Board representative to the EDC)

Absent from EDC: Dawn Willis, John Neyland, Susan Bak

Several members of the public were also present as were representatives of the Select Board and other committees.

Ms. Markowitz called the meeting to order at 7:50 PM at which time the joint agenda discussion with the EDC began.

Mr. Guzzardi Opening Remarks

Mr. Guzzardi welcomed the Planning Board. He expressed that what EDC is looking to do spans across boards. EDC is looking to keep the dialogue open and part of their outreach is to meet with the Planning Board.

Annual Town Meeting Debrief

The EDC and Planning Boards discussed the recent Annual Town Meeting (ATM) and Mr. Guzzardi congratulated the Planning Board on the zoning changes approved at ATM. There was discussion about the several amendments presented by members of the public at ATM to the proposed zoning by-law definition of Specialty Foods. The proposed amendments related to modifying the Specialty Foods definition to allow drive-through windows and curbside pickup. Those amendments were defeated but the sentiment was noted and discussed. Ms. Neville confirmed that the amendments were proposed as a result of the current COVID pandemic. Ms. Neyland mentioned that town counsel is looking into curbside pickup rules and regulations and will issue clarifying guidance to the Select Board so that there is a better understanding as to what is currently permissible.

Phase 1 Boxborough Economic Development Study from UMASS

The Boards discussed the technical report contents, conclusions and the four potential development scenarios included in the report, namely (1) current state; (2) agricultural-rural; (3) village style; and (4) comprehensive development.

Mr. Barbadoro mentioned that there were some inaccuracies in the UMASS report. Mr. Guzzardi said he would reach out to UMASS to request that they update the report and correct any inaccuracies, which they would more likely do in Phase II of the Study. Mr. Barbadoro also commented that with regard to the four scenarios presented in the report, it might be best to be able to pick and choose among the various scenarios—take the best of each as a for instance. He pointed out that per the 2030 Master Plan, town residents prefer character of the town over development by a margin of 2:1. He also noted that the Planning Board is charged with weighing the interest of the town with economic development in any new proposed by-law. Mr. White commented that the intent was never to have four segregated development scenarios -- it was the intent that Boxborough would pick and choose. Mr. Markiewicz commented that people in town want to preserve the character of the town and would pay extra taxes for that, the UMASS study fits the 2030 Master Plan, the area near the hotel would be a good place to offer services to the public who live in town and who travel through town, additional public input is needed on the four scenarios outlined by UMASS and any zoning changes will need public support.

Next Steps Regarding UMASS Study

Mr. Guzzardi discussed with the EDC and Planning Board that the next step in the UMASS study would be to educate the public through an improved website, opening voice overs to describe the four scenarios and social media. The second step is to proceed with the charrettes (public feedback sessions). However, UMASS is going virtual in the Fall and face to face meetings with the public will not likely be possible in the Fall. However, the EDC does want to keep the momentum and not lose focus. To that end, UMASS and the EDC will be discussing how to get the public's input via live feedback sessions. Mr. Guzzardi asked Simon to reach out to UMASS to discuss in detail. Ms. Lazarow raised the issue of the impact of COVID on the UMASS study, and whether they have/will take that into account. Mr. Guzzardi mentioned that the impact of COVID may come up in the Market Assessment portion of the Phase 2 study. It was discussed and agreed that the Planning Board should be involved in the formulation of the questions for the online charettes, and in the process in general. EDC and Planning Board expressed a desire to work together to make the process successful.

Comments from Public

Ms. Neyland mentioned the library as a potential resource for hosting the charettes. She also mentioned that the Select Board is also looking at putting together a committee to look at equality and inclusiveness for housing. These are goals that will need to be considered.

Ms. Nolde mentioned that the Sustainability Committee would like to be included in the process. Ms. Salzman agreed and commented that sustainability needs to be a focus of any future plans.

Mr. Fortmiller suggested looking carefully at Phase 1 and then at how we will be living in the next six months to a year. Some assumptions made pre-COVID may need further consideration. We will need to think carefully about how the COVID pandemic will continue to impact Boxborough.

Beyond Phase II (Charettes)

Ms. Markowitz asked Mr. Guzzardi whether there was a timeline in mind beyond the charettes for completing the UMASS study. Mr. Guzzardi replied that the EDC is focused on the low hanging fruit i.e., small changes that can be done first toward the objectives, that the EDC could recommend for consideration at the next ATM. He mentioned that the EDC is still working on a long-range economic development plan as part of the 2030 Master Plan. Zoning and infrastructure are items that will need to be addressed according to Mr. Guzzardi. Ms. Markowitz stated that the Planning Board is focused on the Action Items associated with the Implementation Plan for the 2030 Master Plan.

Other Business

The Planning Board remained in session while the EDC conducted additional business. They discussed the merits of creating a one-page “Doing business in Boxborough Guide” to help prospective businesses understand the permitting processes in town.

Mr. Barbadoro made a motion to close the Planning Board meeting. Ms. Lazarow seconded. All Planning Board members voted in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Minutes prepared by: Robin Lazarow

Meeting Documents

Boxborough Economic Development Study – Phase 1 Technical Memo