

4/01/15

APRIL 1, 2015

Minutes Joint EDC/ BOS/ Planning Board/ ZBA and Conservation Commission

Attendees:

EDC: Mary Rose Paradis, John Lapoint, Elias Hanna, Kristin Wood, Jeffrey Oberg, Sue Robbins, Phil Holahan

BOS: Jenn Thomas, Brook Padgett (and EDC), Craig Dauphinais, Dennis Flynn

Planning Board: Sargon Hanna, Dave Robbins, Bob Hassinger, Mike Scully (and EDC)

ZBA: Kay Reed, Bill McCuster, Robert Nault, Peter Adams and Mike Robin

Conversation Commission: Peter Finn, Sandy Brock

Attendees: Timothy P. McInerney, Joseph Laydon, Jean Petite, Doug Willardson, Maria Mast and Richard Price

7 pm- Meeting called to order. Elias gave a recap of the January joint meeting. He also updated the group that the EDC paid for the Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool to be conducted by the Northeastern Dukakis Center for the town of Grafton.

7:20pm- Tim updated the group that there is an energy innovation company courting the Creeper Hill property.

- There are two major pharmaceutical companies have recently made inquiries about Tufts Science Park. One of the companies would bring with it 875 jobs which would increase Grafton's commercial tax base from 9% to 25%.

7:25- Joe provided a recap of the January BOS meeting.

- The application to start the Economic Development Self-Assessment tool has been submitted to the Dukakis Center.
- Main Street in South Grafton Improvement Plan will have a consultant on board.
- On June 1 there will be a visual preference study led by CMRPC for the Carrol to Snow Street corridor.
- The town received a \$10k grant from the Heritage Corridor with Fisherville Mill to create a teaching landscape, to develop a conceptual plan, walking trail and educational tool.
- CMRPC is conducting a Freight Rail Study looking at all of the towns along the P&W and identifying opportunities.
- Blackstone Bikeway Assessment Study is underway to look at what work has been done in Grafton, Sutton and Northbridge, why that segment has been pushed aside in the past and trying to ID a path forward.

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- There is an effort to designate the Rushwan property as part of the 43D priority development district (behind the tracks)

8:10- Mike and Kristin from the EDC put forward the following recommendation for the BOS's consideration: The Economic Development Commission would like to propose that the Board of Selectman consider having an Economic Development Study done of the Route 122/140 corridor beginning at Perrault Nursery (Carroll Road) through Quinsigamond Corner following Route 122 to the Grafton/Millbury town line and Route 140 terminating at the Route 140/ Route 30 intersection. The study would begin with a public visioning session and include an examination of zoning, traffic impacts and improvements, design standards, a recommendation of potential bylaws and recommendations of funding opportunities and instruments that can be implemented along the route to address both infrastructure needs and to entice development.

They followed up the recommendation with the following explanation of need:

At our March 18th meeting the EDC unanimously voted that the town is not maximizing the potential of the corridor described above. The morning after the meeting I attended the 495 Partnership's Transportation Subcommittee meeting and spoke to Rob Nagi, the subcommittee's co-chair, about the EDC's ideas and he offered to sit down with us for free and give us some technical assistance. Mike, Joe and I met with Rob and Brian Bronson of VHB informally and discussed what a corridor study versus a master plan versus an economic development study would accomplish based on the EDC's goal of maximizing the corridor's potential by looking at zoning, traffic, traffic impacts, and design standards. VHB saw the corridor as having three distinct economic development issues connected by a roadway corridor. Mike aptly called these- fix (intersection of Routes 140/30), enhance (Carroll to Snow Road) and incentivize (Quinsigamond Corner to Wyman Gordon's). Fix- For any large scale development to be possible at the Tufts Science Park or along Route 30 the intersection of Route 140/30 needs to be examined. Given the traffic bottleneck in Westborough increased traffic to that corridor would need to pass through that intersection which is arguably already at capacity given its long queues and cannot accommodate the significant increase in traffic a full development of the Tufts Science Park would bring or any other significant development along that road for that matter. Enhance- Although the corridor between Carroll and Snow Roads is well developed it is very pedestrian unfriendly, has a high number of accidents and almost impossible to navigate from a traffic perspective during peak hours. Incentivize- The corridor between Quinsigamond Corner to Wyman Gordon sees more than 18k cars a day yet most of the store fronts along this route are empty. As a result of this discussion we walked away thinking an economic development plan would make the most sense. It encompasses all of the items the EDC discussed on a level that would create actionable items not just the need for another plan. The cost and timeline would be \$100k-\$150k and about 1 year. It would start with a public visioning session so the public could weigh in on what they would like to see happen in that corridor. By maximizing this corridor it is the EDC's hope that not only will the town increase tax revenue

through additional businesses these improvements will also significantly help to keep the dollars earned by Grafton residents in Grafton instead of being spent in the surrounding communities.

8:20 Elias asked each member of the Conservation Commission what they feel is the greatest impediment to Economic Development in Grafton.

- Nault- The lengthy permitting process. We need a more streamlined process. (Thursday Development Team meetings were described to the group)
- Adams- The Town's Water Protection Overlay District needs to be reviewed because it is too restrictive. There needs to be some leeway with some of the bylaws.
- John H- Are there examples of how other towns have streamlined the permitting process while still following State law. It seems we are losing out to other towns that have figured this out.
- Sandy- was very supportive on the Thursday meetings. Boards don't want to see ping pong between boards and she thinks those Thursday meetings and the new ConCom staff will help.
- Peter Finn- we need to modernize the permitting process and make it electronic. Maria is in the process of developing a check list to streamline the ConCom process.
- Bill McCusker- There needs to be clear planning upfront so a developer can receive clear direction on what is needed. 40A dictates a lot of regulations that the ZBA needs to enforce and although those can't be simplified clearer direction can be given. The special permit process gives the town opportunity for mitigation so we would not want to get rid of that process.
- Bob H.- The ZBA having no staff assigned to it is an issue. Maybe the Town can use existing staff to assist the ZBA.
- John L. Expressed the EDC's support of the ConCom's efforts.
- Brook- People outside the town looking to locate their businesses in town don't seem to have a big issue with how the town treats businesses. It is folks in town that foster the belief that Grafton is a terrible place to do business that's hurting us. We also need a follow-up meeting with all of the commissions in attendance to discuss the EDC proposal further.
- Dave R.- Long term how do we want to see Grafton grow and develop. We need to think about the big picture when we are making decisions about individual projects and local decisions.
- Craig- The EDC's proposal is exactly what we need to be looking at but we need to pull in 122 South (Pullard Street to Cumberland Farms) and Tufts.
- Sue- Another meeting needs to take place to discuss both the EDC's proposal and the results of the Dukakis study when it is complete.

8:40- Adjourn (John/ Sue)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John' or 'Sue', written in a cursive style.