

ESSEX

Economic Development Commission (EDC)

Meeting Minutes (**draft**)

Date April 1, 2021
Location Online via Microsoft Teams
Members Annie Cooper, Chair, Brian Shelden, Vice-Chair, Jeff Benjamin
Staff Evan Teich, Greg Duggan, Owiso Makuku, Robin Pierce, Darren Schibler
Partners Sam Andersen (GBIC)
Public Irene Wrenner, Ken Signorello, Mariah Henderson

Chair Cooper called the meeting to order at approximately 8:06 am.

There was no changes to agenda or public to be heard.

Approval of Minutes

- Mr Benjamin suggested a correction regarding demolition of buildings in Autumn Pond 2 project and Mr Kosimi agreed to rephrase it to reflect that they are not yet demolished. Mr Benjamin moved to approve the minutes, Vice-Chair Shelden seconded and all members voted, passed 4-0.

Updates from Partners/Staff

- Ms Andersen said that GBIC is closely watching everything that's been going on down at the legislature and gave a summary of bills that passed. She mentioned that the unemployment insurance is the major debate that they are monitoring.

2021 Work Plan

- Chair Cooper spoke about items in EDC's work plan for 2021, including shifting the responsibility on the business list update and upgrades from commission members to staff. She suggested that once the list starts to be used with more agility the information within its columns will solidify on its own accord through the nature of its organic use. Mr Kosimi agreed it could be an effective approach to start using the list and update it as we go. Ms Makuku talked about identifying businesses by categories such as sole proprietorship, small businesses and corporation. Chair Cooper commented that it would be great to set up an intake form on EDC's web page for businesses to share their info to be included in the business directory and outreach activities. Members agreed to continue working on the database alongside and ahead of staff in order to keep making progress together. Mr Benjamin offered to set up mechanism for staff to seek help when needed with growing the list and members supported the idea of coordinating via email whenever staff would like assistance with anything. Ms Makuku and Mr Kosimi agreed to be primary contacts for maintaining and developing the database going forward.
- Chair Cooper raised the topic of local options tax and emphasized that we are simply taking in thoughts while we create survey that will be used to gather feedback from residents and businesses sometime in future. Ms Wrenner said that she had raised her concerns earlier about implementation of local options tax and noted that it was regressive in nature. Chair Cooper shared some opinions she received on her Facebook page regarding this issue. Mr Benjamin underlined that community conversations are very polarized right now and any mention of tax will have strong opposition, so it is critical to be careful with the wording when sending stuff out to businesses and residents. Members and staff discussed ways to better explain the idea behind local option tax and ensure wide public participation before the community eventually votes to either reject or accept the proposal.

- Member of public Mariah Sanderson talked about keeping discussions of cannabis retail and local option tax separate noting that she has concerns about the former as a way to generate more money. Ms Sanderson said that she works in substance misuse prevention in Burlington, but lives in Essex with her kids so is eager to take part in discussions about cannabis retail to reveal some research that may be useful in understanding how community policy impacts substance use rates. Chair Cooper invited Ms Sanderson to join EDC's next meeting and make a guest presentation about cannabis discussion.

Chair Cooper asked for a motion to adjourn at approximately 9:10 am, moved by Vice-Chair Shelden and seconded by Mr Benjamin, passed 4-0.

Prepared by Botur Kosimi

04/26/21