

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)

Meeting Minutes

Date	March 18, 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

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

There was no public to be heard.

Changes to Agenda

Chair Cooper suggested adding an item to agenda to introduce new EDC member Ta Tanisha Reddita. Vice-Chair Shelden motioned to approve the change, seconded by Mr Benjamin, passed 4-0. Members and staff took turns to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Mr Benjamin motioned to approve the minutes and Vice-Chair Shelden seconded it with minor grammatical and spelling corrections, passed 4-0.

Updates from Partners/Staff

- Ms Andersen commented that they are monitoring variety of economic development bills in legislature, including S119, which would allow municipalities to assess local option tax without having to go to legislature. She mentioned about a pilot program on gift cards from several months ago that will not be continued and focusing on ways they can help administer the federal relief package once the details are finalized. She said the biggest issue they are working on right now is S10, which is about the unemployment insurance fund that had an excess before the pandemic and currently severely depleted. Ms Andersen noted that there is a lot of discussion on how to get that fund back to a healthy level in a manner that is not too financially cumbersome for businesses.
- Ms Makuku spoke about the funding available for sole proprietors on state level and the need to clarify in EDC business database which entities are sole proprietors so they can be informed about this financial assistance. Chair Cooper said that she was planning to raise this topic during 2021 Work Plan discussion and Ms Andersen remarked about an email with additional information on the funding available that she will be sending after the meeting.
- Ms Makuku said that staff would like to share with EDC some development applications to get feedback during review process and per Mr Duggan's request, Mr Schibler provided an overview of how that process works for Ms Reddita since she is a new member. Ms Makuku also commented that Ms Patty Davis offered flowerpots to aid businesses at Essex Experience as well as Global Foundries overcame first obstacle in becoming its own power utility, which Ms Andersen explained would mean purchasing cheaper electricity directly from the transmission grid bypassing distribution utilities. Ms Andersen remarked that it is a complex undertaking and affects the electricity rates for everyone. She again

touched upon the topic of funding for sole proprietorships sharing specifics from the email she received such as the new round being open from April 25 to May 26 and 5 requirements for applicants to be eligible for the money.

- Mr Pierce talked about Village Planning Commission's meeting tonight regarding Autumn Pond 2 project which will create 72 residential apartments available to public once it is complete. Current buildings are expected to be demolished due to not meeting good residential habitation standards.

2021 Work Plan

- Chair Cooper shared her thoughts about EDC projects, including local option tax being a study requested in determining how businesses feel about it and decision to combine development of business list with survey when reaching out to local businesses. She expressed her feeling that local option tax is generating much energy and discussion and opined that this conversation belongs back with the boards, so they can direct us better on how to move forward with it. Vice-Chair Shelden agreed that it is a good idea to seek more input from the boards, but did not see a problem with pursuing the study since it does not involve policymaking. Mr Benjamin mentioned that there are still many aspects of the local option tax which are not entirely clear and he welcomes any thoughts from staff in coming up with good talking points on how we're supposed to discuss it with businesses. Chair Cooper said that she had asked to be on the agenda for the joint meeting of the boards on 03/22/21 and will be seeking a bit more guidance so all members and staff can be clearer about it.
- Chair Cooper proposed adding more categories to the business list to capture some useful specific information such as which entities are sole proprietors, located in the village or town, etc. Vice-Chair Shelden and Mr Benjamin offered to help with anything to get it moving forward. Ms Makuku remarked that it was impressive that of all the emails in the current database only about 3 bounced back and she was able to correct them. Chair Cooper reiterated her excitement about collaboration with other committees and encouraged joining their meetings on a regular basis to be aware about everything that affects economic development in our community.

Chair Cooper made a motion to adjourn at approximately 9:00 am, moved by Vice-Chair Shelden and seconded by Mr Benjamin, passed 4-0.

Prepared by Botur Kosimi on 03/25/21

Approved 04/01/2021