Attending: George Zaharoolis, Donald Van Dyne, Bill Murphy, Kenneth Lefebvre, Joseph Ready, Nancy Araw, Scott Rummel

Not Present:

Others Present: Evan Belansky, Community Development Director, Beverly Woods-Director, NMCOG, Jay Donovan, NMCOG (8:07PM)

Please note that all documents referenced in these minutes are on file at the Town Manager’s Office, 50 Billerica Rd., Chelmsford, Mass. This meeting was hand recorded by the Recording Secretary.

This meeting was called to order at 7:01PM by Chairman Zaharoolis.

7:00- 7:15 Open Session
No one came forward at this time.

Vision statement - discussion
No further discussion at this time

Lisa Marrone – Director of Business Development
Ms. Marrone explained that she has been meeting with multiple business owners and brokers in all areas of Town. She described her efforts in trying to fill empty business space. The lack of business amenities in some areas is still detracting from the appeal of moving to Chelmsford. A grant program to attract amenities to the Rt. 129 area is available; there have been inquiries, but no applications yet. She has been told that Chelmsford has done everything possible to make Chelmsford an attractive area to locate. Her role is to be seen as a resource for businesses, and to attract more business. Stakeholders and property owners are free to make their own decisions; the Town has very little control other than through zoning efforts. She is trying to attract bio-tech businesses that cannot find adequate space in Boston. Advertising efforts were described. Promotion of the existing businesses may be part of what is needed to promote the area. She understands it will take more time and work to get the word out of what Chelmsford has to offer.

Mr. Murphy described conditions in Burlington, and agreed restaurants will attract more business. He noted that in Virginia, many of the types of buildings that are similar to what is in Chelmsford are being torn down because they are not attracting tenants. Ms. Marrone noted that the property owners have not
been interested in splitting up their spaces, or in speculative development. Mr. Zaharoolis recalled that even in the 2010 Master Plan it was noted that these buildings were outdated, and to split them up was very expensive. The property owners are still not willing to invest in them. The property owners are large corporations with many other locations, and Chelmsford is not their priority. Mr. Murphy noted there are towns in this country that are imposing penalties for keeping their buildings vacant. Ms. Marrone noted that there is empty space everywhere, not just in Chelmsford. Things will take time.

Ms. Marrone indicated there is a need to be able to create additional marketing materials. It is difficult to create certain types of brochures because the properties are all privately owned. Mr. Rummel suggested drafting up a potential business plan to show tenants and property owners. Ms. Marrone described her efforts in this area as well, and she was basically advised by the property owners that these services were not needed. Mr. Van Dyne advised that all the tools are available. Mr. Ready advised that Ms. Marrone’s efforts are noticed, and are received positively. The Town is extremely responsive.

Next year, Ms. Marrone wants to put on a small business seminar. Mr. Ready thinks more support should be given to TIF agreements. Ms. Woods noted that there are more employees working from home, and less need for large amounts of office space. There has been interest in shared space work arrangements.

Ms. Araway asked if additional housing resources would be needed if all of the buildings on Rt. 129 were filled. There was overall agreement that there is adequate housing.

Ms. Marrone sees a future need for high bay industrial types of space for manufacturing and fulfillment center type operations. Life science companies tend to want mixed use type spaces. The biggest challenge for businesses is looking for talent. Ms. Marrone has been in contact with all of the local colleges and universities.

**NMCOG – review of land use and Economic Development sections**

**Review of committee input**

Updated documents were provided to the Committee.

The Board of Selectmen have been working on a Vision, Values and Mission Statement, part of which is considering doing a survey. Mr. Belansky suggested combining several efforts to complete one survey, as the Master Plan Committee, the Age-Friendly Committee and the Census Committee all also want to do a survey. Mr. Lefebvre provided background on where this idea has come from, and used an example from the Town of Ashland. That type of Vision Statement is different than the Vision Statement that this Committee would use. Mr. Zaharoolis suggested forming a joint subcommittee and combine all the goals into one survey.

A list of topics to include in the update document was reviewed. There has not been demand for multi-family residential development. Residents have expressed opposition to or outright rejected several forms of economic development, including more residential development. The average resident doesn’t see positive impacts of development, just more taxes and traffic. Mr. Belansky feels this Master Plan should address these conflicts. Many conversations are viewed as a threat, not an opportunity. The Town may be
Committee members were asked to review the outline, and send comments to Mr. Belansky for the next meeting.

Public input sessions – discussion
Discussion was tabled at this time.

Agenda items for next meeting
A representative from the Age-Friendly Committee will come to the November 21, 2019 meeting.

December 12-NMCOG will not be able to attend this meeting

Approval of minutes
October 10, 2019

Motion: by Mr. Lefebvre to approve the Meeting Minutes of October 10, 2019, as presented.
Seconded by Mr. Ready. Mr. Rummel abstained, all others in favor Motion carries, 6-0.

Adjourn

Motion: by Mr. Lefebvre to adjourn the meeting at 9:11PM. Seconded by Ms. Araway. Motion carries, unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,
Vivian W. Merrill,
Recording Secretary

Supporting Documents:
-Draft Minutes
-Draft updates to the Economic Development Section of the Master Plan.