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TOWN OF CHELMSFORD PATRICIA E. DZURIS TOWN CLERK

Town of Chelmsford  
Center Village Master Plan Committee  
50 Billerica Rd., Room 205 Chelmsford, Ma 01824  
Regular Meeting  
MINUTES  
January 10, 2019  
Approved April 11, 2019

**Attending:** Jack Handley, Donald Van Dyne, Brian Milisci, Janet Askenburg

**Not Present:** Peggy Dunn, Michael Rigney

**Others Present:** Evan Belansky, Community Development Director, Paul Cohen, Town Manager

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 7:00PM by Mrs. Askenburg.

**Small business grant initiative presentation - Lisa Marrone**

Franky Descoteaux, Director, Merrimack Valley Small Business Center was present with Business Development Director Lisa Marrone.

Ms. Marrone explained the goals and Mission Statement for the Small Business Grant Program. This is a pilot program, but the Town hopes to make it a recurring grant. The goal is to encourage new business and enhance existing businesses. The grant program will provide business development funds which must be used by June 30, 2019. Program details were described. The process is a written application including having a business plan, and an interview. Assessment and Interview Evaluation criteria were listed. The finalist interview process was summarized. Application forms are online, available through "google docs" on the town website.

Ms. Marrone explained that for businesses that are not awarded, there are other programs available through the Small Business Center which will also help applicants, which were listed. A permitting guide is being developed to help new business owners.

Grant applicant requirements were listed, and will be different for new businesses vs. existing businesses. Home offices will not qualify; the application is for storefront businesses only. Awards will range from \$2000.00-\$10,000.00. Grant use of funds could include start-up costs, leasehold improvements, lease or rental down payments for a new business only, and could include 50% asset purchase up to \$2500.00.

Grant proceeds could also be used for internal store front improvements, inventory and stock, or technology.

Limitations and restrictions of the program were listed. Landlords are responsible for exterior improvements; signage grants will be a separate program. An applicant is not allowed to pay off existing debt, or for large asset purchases.

The Town reserves the right to publically announce award winners and funding awards in order to secure future funding from the State. Ms. Marrone is very interested in receiving feedback from applicants.

There is an emphasis is on filling vacant storefronts. There could be potential state programs that may be coming in down the road.

Ms. Decoteaux explained the Merrimack Valley Small Business Center opened in June, 2018 to serve Middlesex and Essex Counties. The center offers business support from prelaunch to exit strategy. As a Small Business Association micro lender, they can make low interest loans up to \$20,000.00.

Committee member Brian Milisci explained to the audience what the Center Village Master Plan Implementation Committee does. Part of their work is to encourage new business in Center Village. Some of the vision of the Master Plan is developing.

Community Development Director Evan Belansky explained there will be new wayfinding signage installed in the center in Spring, 2019. Other items being worked on include capital improvement, monitoring the underground utility installation, construction of brick sidewalks, development of the brook walk development, Cushing Place reconstruction, streetscape improvements, monitoring development of a condominium building being constructed, and programming. Programming includes how to bring visitors to the Center Village through public events, strolls, festivals, artisan themed events, etc. The Town and this committee will be hoping to work with many local business owners. There is a potential to develop a user-group or newsletter in the future. Current vacant storefront spaces were listed.

An audience member asked about the status of the Oddfellows Building. Mr. Belansky explained that the lease agreement with Santander Bank expires June 2020, and the property owner is a holding company and is waiting to see what Santander Bank is going to do with their lease, and how much of the property they want to continue to use.

Attendees were encouraged to spread the word about this program.

### **Signage and street furniture update**

Mr. Belansky reported that the DPW is storing all the equipment ordered for the Center to date; photos of the products can be sent to committee members if desired. The consultant that assisted with the signage project has been paid. There will be a meeting with the DPW, the Town Manager and other stakeholders in April to discuss how to install the equipment. Mrs. Askenburg suggested meeting earlier so work can start in April. Mr. Belansky thought startup would happen very quickly in the spring due to the

Massworks grant work which must be done by June 30, 2019. Many things will need to be coordinated. Installation bids came in very high, and some work will need to be rebid. Mrs. Askenburg wanted to promote the work to create excitement. There could be newspaper articles or Board of Selectmen meeting presentation. Mr. Belansky will have an additional update for the Committee's February 7, 2019 meeting.

#### **Other existing projects updates**

Mr. Belansky is working on two grant applications, both of which will involve applying for CPA funds. Committee members were asked to attend the next Community Preservation Committee meeting on January 16, 2019.

Mr. Belansky, Mr. Rigney, and Mr. Milisci are meeting with the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust at their meeting on January 22, 2019.

The Conservation Commission and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee have written letters of support for the grant requests.

The foundation has been poured for the Cushing Place condominium development. The property at 9 Acton Rd. is for sale. There is potential for redevelopment at this location.

A noodle restaurant is slated for the former Cancun restaurant location. The new restaurant is expected to open in February, 2019.

There are no updates regarding the former Mobil Gas station site, Friendly's Restaurant, or the Med Express site.

#### **New Items including possible roadside signage**

Mrs. Askenburg explained she saw a sign on Rt. 495 for Littleton Historic Town Common. She would like to research whether something like this can be done for Chelmsford Center.

Mr. Belansky explained that most likely the town is paying for the sign on the highway.

#### **Minutes Approval**

##### **December 6, 2018**

**Motion:** by Mr. Milisci to approve the minutes of December 6, 2018, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Van Dyne. **Motion carries, unanimous**

#### **Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be held on February 7, 2019.

The Artisan's Exchange will be invited in to talk about the Gift Stroll held in December. Ms. Marrone will provide an update on the Small Business Grant Program. Information on the grant program has been mailed to property owners and there are e-mails going out. The same information about the grant program will be presented at the Board of Selectmen meeting on January 28, 2019. The Chelmsford Business

Association has sent out the information to their members; and the newspapers and real estate brokers will also receive the information.

### **Adjournment**

**Motion:** by Mr. Milisci to adjourn this meeting at 8:35PM. Seconded by Mr. Handley. **Motion carries, unanimous**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Vivian W. Merrill,  
Recording Secretary

List of Reference Documents:

- Small Business Grant Program Presentation
- Draft Minutes