

**Economic Development Commission
Chelmsford MA 01824**



Meeting Date: 2 November 2022
Location: Virtual Meeting via TEAMS Application
Present: L. Marrone, P. Cohen, S. Chase, M. Kowalyk, L. Smith, J. Wellman
Absent: D. Van Dyne, T. Boucher, A. Grasruk, E. Belansky
Public Present: None
Meeting Called to Order at: 7:10 PM

Note 1: This meeting was convened so that current Economic Development Commission (EDC) members could discuss the continued viability of the EDC. This discussion is prompted by the Select Board's desire to examine the EDC's role going forward.

Note 2: D. Van Dyne and T. Boucher have resigned from the EDC, leaving the committee with 5 active members.

1. L Marrone gave highlights from her Economic Development Progress Report recently presented to the Selectboard. There have been many economic successes despite the adverse economic environment we've endured as result of COVID and other negative conditions.
2. The primary purpose of the EDC was to establish a community focus on the need for full-time attention on economic development as a healthy component of the town's revenue base to help stabilize residential tax increases. In the initial stages, EDC was active and visible in establishing that focus, which ultimately resulted in the hiring of a full-time Economic Development Director (L. Marrone) and the branding of the 129 Corridor. The economic development focus and workload has now correctly shifted to the Economic Development Director, and EDC members now question the continued need for a standing committee to "shadow" a paid professional who is an integral part of the Town's Executive Administration.
3. S. Chase relayed highlights from his recent conversation with E. Belansky. E. Belansky suggested continuing EDC in a "reduced" capacity, whose main functions would be to act as an independent set of eyes on proposed development and to offer support for the town's Economic development team, perhaps meeting quarterly. E. Belansky is concerned about the "message" outright dissolution of the EDC might send externally, Chelmsford being a large community still seeking area development partners. S. Chase would support a reduced EDC role if that's what the committee's majority wants.
4. M. Kowalyck said the EDC, in such a "reduced" role could serve as an independent spokesgroup for economic development, and could as well act as a "counterbalance" to citizens' insular thinking when it comes to development issues. In this role, we would function strictly in a review/support role for Economic Development Team initiatives.

5. L. Marrone said that she is now well established (five years) in her role, and the initial mission of the EDC (see 2. above) has been fulfilled. She reports directly to the Town Manager and updates the community regularly through presentations to the Select and Planning Boards, as well as other groups as the circumstances warrant. Given the scope of her activities, she is not sure that there is a continuing requirement for “support” from a standing committee whose mission has largely been accomplished. L. Marrone said she could support the concept of a “reduced” and “support only” Committee meeting quarterly.

6. L. Smith agreed that the current situation does not warrant a standing committee to oversee or support the efforts of a full-time professional Economic Development Director. She would however, support the “reduced” role model suggested by E. Belansky.

7. J. Wellman said that the EDC succeeded because at the time we were appointed (prior to L. Marrone’s on-boarding) we had a strategic goal, which was to raise awareness for the need to focus on smart economic development, advocate for the hiring of a full-time professional Director, and to work on establishing branding for the Route 129 corridor and other target areas in Chelmsford. We largely succeeded in those efforts. J. Wellman said that without a defined purpose/objective, it is hard to justify continuing EDC as a standing committee integral to Chelmsford development initiatives.

8. P. Cohen said that recent economic-related issues have not required EDC participation as these are currently being addressed by the Select, Planning, and other boards as appropriate. There has been no call from the major Boards to involve the EDC in economic-impact related issues. As the appointing authority, he believes that it may be better to dissolve the EDC as a standing Committee and leave open the option of reactivating it on an “as needed” basis (Ad Hoc Committee) to address specific and targeted issues relating to economic development. M. Kowalyck said that this may be a better approach and would allow the appointing authority to seek out committee members having specific expertise related to the issue(s) at hand that standing committee members may not possess.

9. All Committee members agreed, in view of present circumstances and the fact that the current position of Economic Development Director is now well defined and operating within the Town’s Executive Management structure, to support the suggestion that the EDC be dissolved as a standing Committee. EDC members support the idea of EDC-focused Ad Hoc Committee appointment(s) as current issues and circumstances may warrant. This will allow the appointment of people having specific expertise in the areas under consideration.

10. P. Cohen will review this discussion with the Select Board at their November 7, 2022 meeting (agenda item).

Meeting adjourned at 8:14PM.

Submitted,

Sam Chase, Economic Development Commission