



Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee

Meeting Minutes Wednesday, April 18, 2018

Pamela DiPietro-Hale <i>Chair</i>	✓	Sandra Lipsey	✓	Andrea Ferrante <i>Council Liaison</i>	✓
Chris Wasileski <i>Vice Chair</i>	-	William Lunt III	✓	Nathan Poore <i>Staff</i>	-
Dimitri Balatsos	✓	Mindy Schwartz	✓	Theo Holtwijk <i>Staff</i>	✓
Ethan Gamage	✓			Andrew Clark <i>Staff</i>	✓

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 pm.

1. Review Draft Minutes of March 21 and April 4, 2018 Meetings

The draft minutes of the March 21 and April 4 meetings were accepted as written.

2. Work Plan Assignment Discussion

Theo invited Ethan Croce, Director of Community Development, to the May 16 meeting. Ethan C. will provide a "Zoning 101" for the committee to help educate everyone on the fundamentals of zoning and the site plan review process. He will also discuss common issues that applicants may be having with the process. Bill said he will not be present at that meeting, but that he has already had similar conversations with Ethan C. in the past. Theo said he hoped the conversation would help the committee move from general discussion to specific recommendations, where applicable.

Dimitri asked whether the Town has ever compared its ordinances and processes to those of neighboring towns. Theo said that work occurs as issues arise, but it is not a high priority of staff to perform a comprehensive review compared to its other duties. Andrea added it would be a good task for the Zoning subcommittee. Sandra said there is a perception that doing business in Falmouth is more difficult, but that being better educated on the issues would help the committee address that perception.

Andrea said she had received feedback from Councilor Karen Farber on the committee's revised charge. Karen is concerned with the phrase "ordinance development," and wondered whether the committee's role should be in crafting policy or, instead, be restricted to identifying issues and making suggestions. The committee agreed it was not its intention to write ordinance language, but that it would like to be able to make recommendations or suggestions for consideration of the Council. Ethan G. noted the committee had followed a similar approach when asked for input on the development of the temporary sign ordinance.

Andrea said she welcomed the committee's role in creating a dialogue with the business community. She felt the public meeting format can be productive and helpful. Andrew noted the developing

business forum would be a good way to keep a conversation going between businesses, the committee, and the Council. Ethan G. added the upcoming Developers' Forum would have a similar effect.

There was general discussion about the Town's ordinances, and how they have become complicated and inconsistent in some cases over time. Theo said the ad-hoc Zoning Committee has been working to address this. That committee is currently dormant, but recent staff changeover may revive it. Bill supported reviving that committee to help make progress on this issue, that he felt was long-standing. Mindy asked whether there was a written list of specific known zoning issues. Andrea said that information is typically not recorded in a central location. She added that the ad-hoc Zoning Committee work to date could help in that regard. She noted the high value of having clean ordinances that the public can understand. She said Council liaisons can bring issues like this to the attention of the full Council at its annual workplan development retreat.

The committee worked out the committee's next two months of scheduling and agendas:

- May 2: Zoning and Events subcommittees
- May 16: Full committee (with Ethan C.)
- June 6: Forum/Speaker Series subcommittee
- June 20: Full committee

Sandra asked if anyone knew of an expert on marketing a town, and inviting he/she to address the committee at a future meeting. Theo said he could come up with some names, adding that it could possibly be part of another forum/event. There was additional discussion on avenues available for marketing Falmouth as a place to live and do business, and to whom the town is marketed.

Dimitri asked whether the Town offers tax breaks to businesses as an incentive to locate in Falmouth. Theo said the Town has entered into two credit enhancement agreements in the past. The Council carefully weighs whether such arrangements make business and community development sense. Mindy asked if there were specific economic development goals of the Town. Theo said generally municipalities want to increase the commercial percentage of the tax base, but that no specific goal was set in Falmouth.

Mindy asked how many commercial vacancies there were in Falmouth. Theo said there is no specific count, but the vacancy rate is low and notable vacancies have recently been filled. Pam asked about any new businesses coming to Falmouth. Theo said staff continue to be in active discussion with the owners of the West Falmouth Crossing, the Falmouth Shopping Center, the Walmart property, the former Pratt-Abbott and Five Co. Federal Credit Union properties, an Irving property on Route 1, and Tidewater Village, but there are no specifics to offer at this time.

3. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

4. Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for May 2 at 4:30 pm, for the Zoning and Events subcommittees.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Draft minutes prepared by Andrew Clark on April 19, 2018.