



**ECDC COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Minutes of Tuesday, October 6, 2020
6:30 PM**

Committee Members participating were Select Board Vice Chair Lynne Bermudez, Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian, Zillie Bhujju, Sarah Guido, Janet Kmetz, Rosie Discipio, Kimberly Daly, Kim Philpot, and Rich Crosson. Also present were Select Board Chair John Spencer, and Select Board members Dick Gandt, Boyd Jackson and Marshall Hook.

GOVERNOR'S ORDER

Select Board Vice Chair Bermudez announced that, due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency announced by Governor Baker, this meeting would be conducted as a Virtual Meeting via ZOOM and as such, participation was remote. She then read the following:

"Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, § 18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Topsfield Select Board will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Topsfield website at www.topsfield-ma.gov For this meeting, members of the public who wish to watch or listen to the meeting may do so in the following manner: Video conference (see log-in information below.) No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Topsfield website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting."

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Bermudez called the meeting to order at 6:33PM.

NEW BUSINESS

Review of Open Meeting Law

Vice Chair Bermudez reviewed that as a committee of the Select Board the ECDC must follow Open Meeting Law. Meetings are open to the public, all meetings and agenda must be posted, the Governor's announcement must be read and minutes taken and posted.

She stated that as the member of the Select Board charged with leading the Downtown Revitalization efforts she will be the ECDC's direct line to the board. She will temporarily chair the first few meetings but would like to evolve into being just a committee member with a vote being taken to elect an ECDC Chair for this fiscal year.

Review of Downtown Revitalization Initiatives

Town Administrator Harutunian reviewed the following eleven initiatives he has recommended as priorities for FY21 to move forward with the revitalization of the downtown:

- Creation of an Economic & Community Development Committee (ECDC) to support the evaluation and implementation of revitalization initiatives
- Development of a Streetscape Design for Main St. (Funded through a \$15,000 EBSCO donation)
- Installation of Solar Lights on Main St. (Funded through a \$183,000 state grant)
- Installation of a parklet, bump outs and decorations for Main St. (funded through the same state grant funding the solar lights)
- Design and install Way finding Signage
- Explore uses for the former DPW facility
- Obtain state funding for the development of a Master Plan (\$100,000 state earmark submitted – pending approval)
- Create a Development Showcase to highlight Topsfield to businesses and developers
- Create a centralized pocket park
- Create a Public Art Committee
- Investigate the possibility of installing electric vehicle charging stations

Discussion of Priorities/Next Steps

TA Harutunian asked the group for their input/reaction to the initiative to create a Public Art Committee as one of the ECDC's first activities. Discussion was held on the kinds of public art being considered (permanent or temporary), possible locations for the art displays (the Gould Barn and the former DPW facility), and whether music should be considered in addition to art. Also discussed was whether a new committee should be formed or whether art installations could best be handled under the new Recreation Director or with the Cultural Council. Janet Kmetz shared that she believes the Cultural Council is focused on providing grants to local artists vs coordinating the exhibits/events themselves.

Zillie Bhujy offered to inquire into public art offerings in Ipswich (where she currently operates a business) and whether they have a public art committee. Vice Chair Bermudez will talk with Kathleen Hunt, Chair of the Cultural Council, to confirm their role/activities and with the Town Administrator regarding artistic events and the new position of Recreation Director.

Vice Chair Bermudez provided background on the Downtown Revitalization efforts since 2019 including the development a Downtown Revitalization Strategic Plan which included five major goals:

- 1: Attract new businesses to the downtown to respond to the needs of residents.
- 2: Increase the customer base in the district to support downtown businesses by adding housing, and market the village to residents and visitors.
- 3: Enhance the look, feel and safety of the district to maintain a vibrant and walkable downtown and create a sense of place where all can gather.
- 4: Increase Community Building Events in the district to maintain a more energetic Downtown.
- 5: Expand Town capabilities and resources to achieve these goals.

The role of the ECDC was reviewed including input and support on project priorities and plans, communicating with businesses and residents, and generating interest, support and possible assistance from the community.

Discussion was held on the committee's view of what activities are most important to revitalizing the Downtown. Recommendations included removing the telephone poles/burying the wires, creating more reasons to come to Town/drawing people into the downtown, storefront improvements, visual enhancements, event/recreation opportunities and funds or low interest loans to support local businesses suffering hardships.

Sarah Guido, President of the non-profit, Topsfield Community Partnership (TCP) provided an update on TCP's activities including storefront and landscaping improvements and a possible fundraiser to supply flowers for the 19 solar lights to be installed on Main St in 2020.

Vice Chair Bermudez will provide committee members with a copy of the eleven initiatives reviewed by the Town Administrator at tonight's meeting as well as a copy of the Downtown Revitalization Strategic Plan. Members will review these materials and provide to the Town Administrator's office (dmorong@topsfield-ma.org) by October 27th a list of the revitalization initiatives they believe are priorities and on which they would like the ECDC to focus. These group priorities will be discussed at the next meeting.

The committee confirmed that meetings will be held the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm. Vice Chair Bermudez will talk with the Town Administrator to ensure he does not have any conflicts with these dates/times.

ADJOURN

At 7:40PM, Lynne Bermudez moved for the Select Board to adjourn and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynne Bermudez - Select Board Vice Chair

DOCUMENTS

1. Agenda

<p>Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18-25, the approval of these minutes by the Board constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Board as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.</p>
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